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HITHER & THITHER OR GOOD TIMES

PAPA'S LITTLE DAUGHTERS

BY

MARY D. BRINE



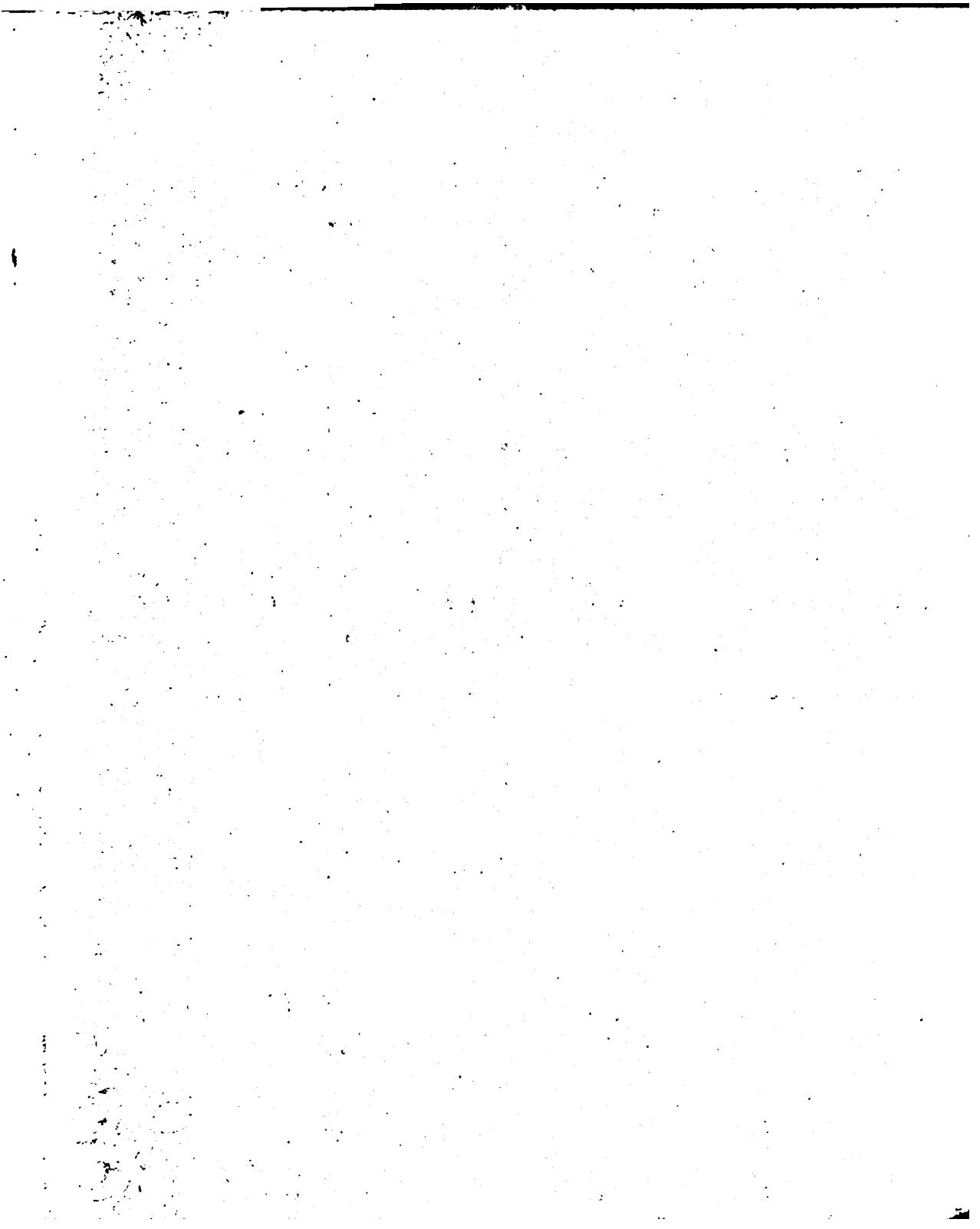
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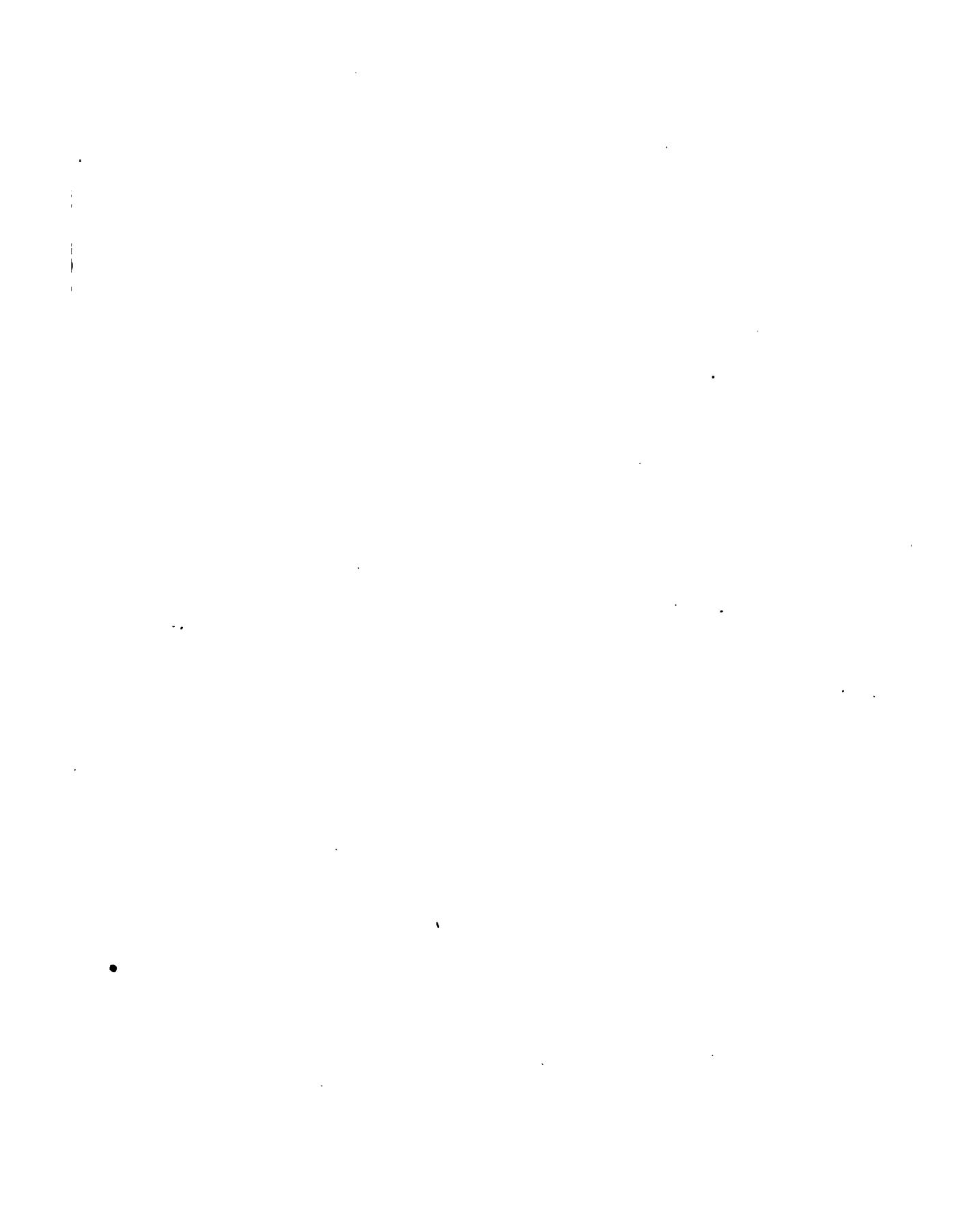
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"PAPA'S DAUGHTER."

HITHER AND THITHER

OR

GOOD TIMES FOR PAPA'S LITTLE DAUGHTERS

BY

MRS. MARY D. BRINE

AUTHOR OF "PAPA'S LITTLE DAUGHTERS," "FOUR LITTLE FRIENDS;
OR, PAPA'S DAUGHTERS IN TOWN," "JINGLES AND JOYS
FOR WEE GIRLS AND BOYS," ETC., ETC.



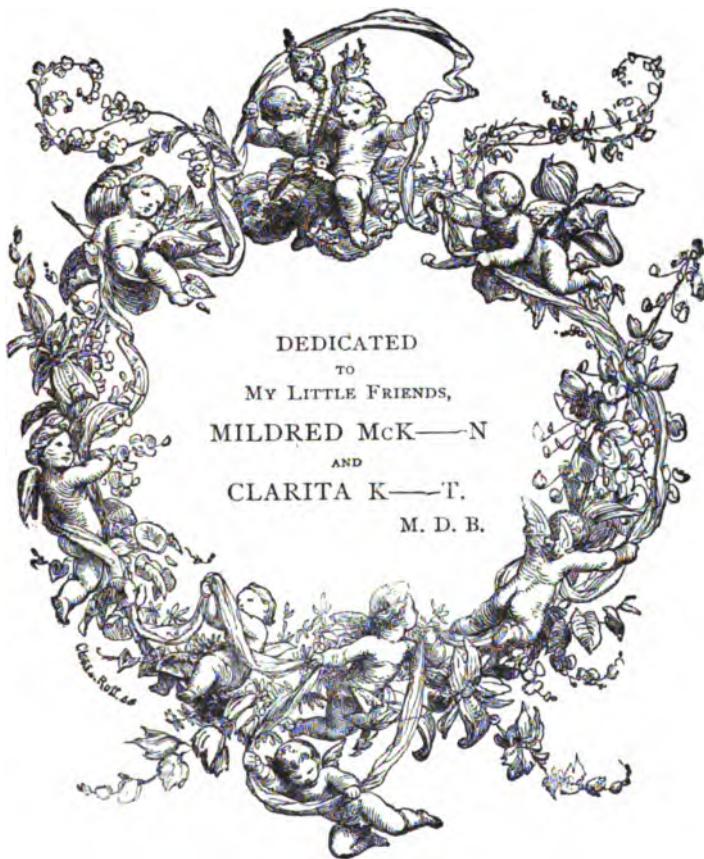
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DEDICATED
TO
MY LITTLE FRIENDS,
MILDRED McK—N
AND
CLARITA K—T.
M. D. B.



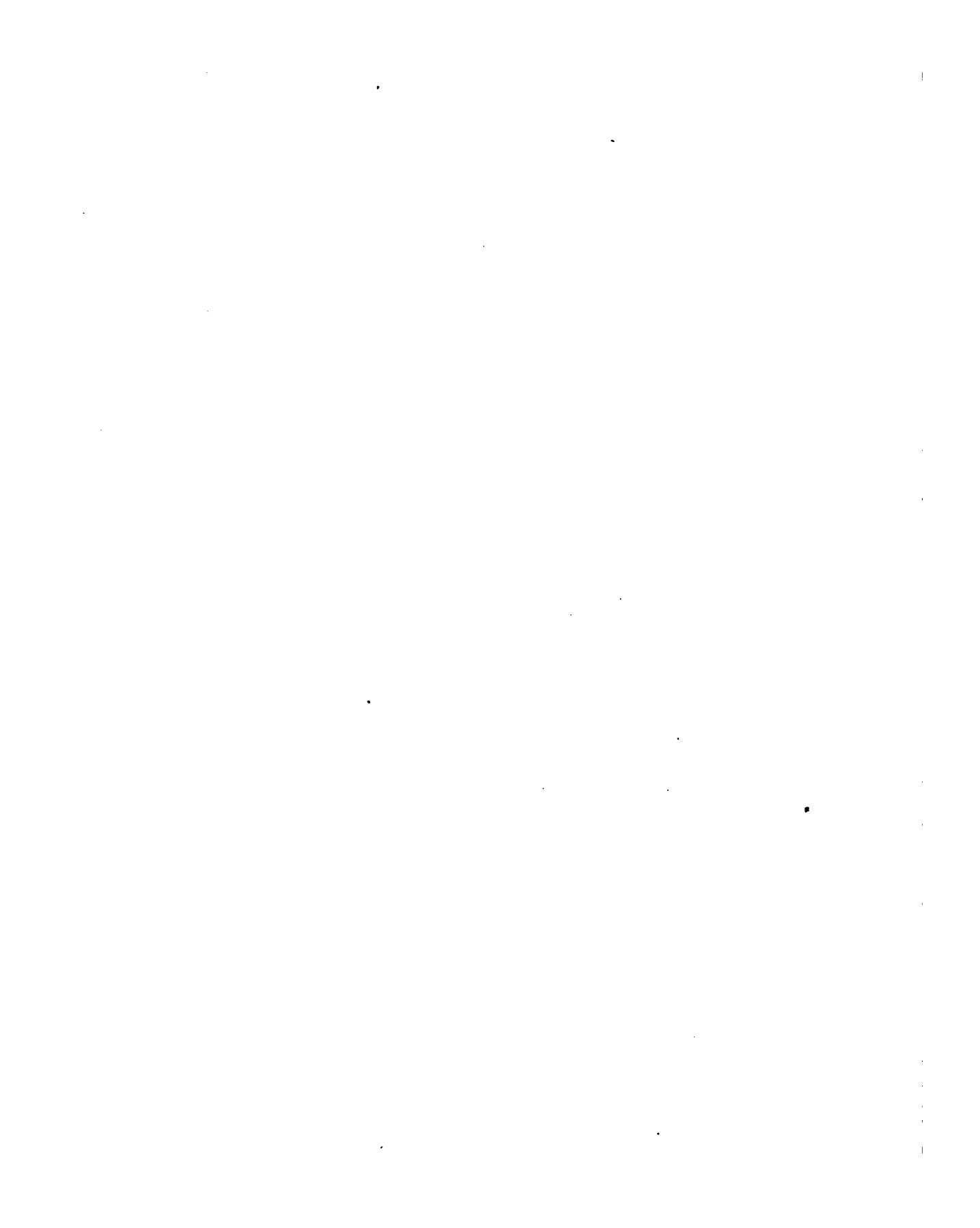
SUMMER DAYS

With the merry Summer days
Little friends again may meet,
And with pleasant plans for all,
Joyously each other greet.
Roving over hill and dale,

'Neath the skies so fair and blue,
Little hearts should surely grow
Yet more happy and more true,
Children, here receive from me

Best of wishes,

M. D. B.



HITHER AND THITHER;

OR,

GOOD TIMES FOR PAPA'S LITTLE DAUGHTERS.

CHAPTER I.

PROSPECTS, AND—PUNS.



ONCE more we greet our four little friends of last winter. Madge and Margie Moore, Birdie Starr, and Master Bobby Reynolds. Those who knew these little people last year will remember that we left them exultant over the engagement of Madge's and Margie's dear Aunt Gracie, to Bobby's favorite Uncle George. You will also remember how jubilant Bobby was at the news which would make Auntie his own Auntie in very truth, and give him the

long desired relationship of "cousin" to his dearest friends and cronies, Madge and Margie Moore. And as there was also in the hearts of those little girls an unbounded delight at the prospect of claiming Uncle George as a *real* uncle, as well as being able to declare proudly that Bobby Reynolds was their "truly" cousin, you may be sure there was much impatience for the arrival of the all important day. There had only been one disappointment connected with the glad tidings of Auntie's engagement, and that was on Bobby's part, when he was informed that Uncle George was to live with the Moores, instead of—as the little boy had fondly hoped—bringing the sweet and gentle lady whom he loved so dearly, and "next to his own dear mamma," to live with mamma and himself "forever'n'ever!" But that would never have done, you see, since Aunt Gracie had taken such loving care of her small nieces since their mamma's death, and had made her brother's home so happy, that she could not have been spared, and it would, she well knew, have broken the hearts of those little nieces had any other relative been given charge over them in her place.

So that was speedily settled, much to the comfort of all save Bobby, but he became resigned finally, and decided that after all, "it was nice for a feller to have two homes, and be jolly in 'em both by turns."

He and the girls had a number of discussions concerning the

approaching event, or as Bob called it, "performance." And sometimes Auntie, chancing to be an unwilling listener to those confabs, which were held on the stairs quite as often as anywhere else, was obliged to hold her handkerchief close to her mouth to stifle a "giggle" which would have betrayed her presence and much embarrassed the small gossips. She had learned by this time that she was expected, when the time of ceremony should arrive, to faint away and be caught in the groom's gallant and tender arms before she touched the floor. She had also learned that it would be natural for her to "feel queer" over the thing, because, as Madge said pityingly to Bobby, "she couldn't blame Auntie if she felt so, as it was a thing she wasn't used to, you see, and folks always felt queer the first time they were married. She knew, for Bridget had told her so."

Margie had remarked at least fifty times that "she did wish the fun would hurry and come," and Bobby had called it a "regular circus" so many times, that one day Uncle George overhearing him, asked what he would do if the monkeys were sick, at the time, and there should be no performance. "Who's the monkeys, any how?" asked Bob, and waxed wrathful when told he was one of them. The wedding was to take place in the spring, that is during May, and it had seemed to the little folks as though winter would never go. But little by little the air grew soft and softer, little by little the buds dotted branches and boughs, and

swelled almost to bursting in the city parks. Little by little the grass turned from brown to green and began to stand erect in the soft, yielding earth. The skies grew bluer to look upon, and the clouds grew more fleecy. And oh! the saucy sparrows which make such a noise in the glad springtide, and are so busily important on their house-keeping plans! March and April came and went, and May began its reign. In its last week, Auntie Grace was to become Mrs. Benton, and as Bob remarked wittily, (it would not be fair to tell that he had spent nearly a week getting up the joke), "they would know *no Moore* about her."

Practical little Margie did not appreciate his pun as she might if it had been more truthful, for she said she "hated stories even in fun, and Bob knew they would know about Auntie Grace just the same as if she wasn't married." Uncle George also was guilty of punning on the occasion, and expected to be praised when he declared that he was *Bent on* having one *Moore* good thing in his life, and that was why he took *heart of Grace* and asked for her. Don't you think he deserved the praise he expected for such a succession of smart efforts? And he received it, you may be sure, from not only the blushing Auntie, but the papa and the children beside. Only Bobby was inclined to withhold a little credit from his Uncle when he said, "Pooh, Uncle George inherited puns from me. Mamma always says we're just alike!"

CHAPTER II.

"SUCH CHARMING PLANS!"



MADGE sat alone in Auntie's room, dressing a dolly and singing softly to herself a song manufactured by her and Margie after much thought and secret effort. The melody I can't give you here, but it would be a pity to let words so truly graceful and touching die in the darkness of oblivion, so here they are.

Dear Auntie is going to be marri-ed,
Marri-ed-oh, marri-ed !
Dear Auntie will wear a white veil on her head,
In the very last week of May-ay.
Oh, what will she do when the time is here,
The time is here, the time is here !
We're thinking she'll certainly feel very queer,
When she's giving herself away-ay.

Then likely as not dear Auntie will cry,
Auntie will cry, Auntie will cry ;
And to keep our tears back we children must try,
Altho' we shall feel pretty blue-oo.
And then, oh dear, when the wedding is done,
When the wedding is done, wedding is done.
Won't we children have oceans of fun,
For seeing the thing all through-oo !

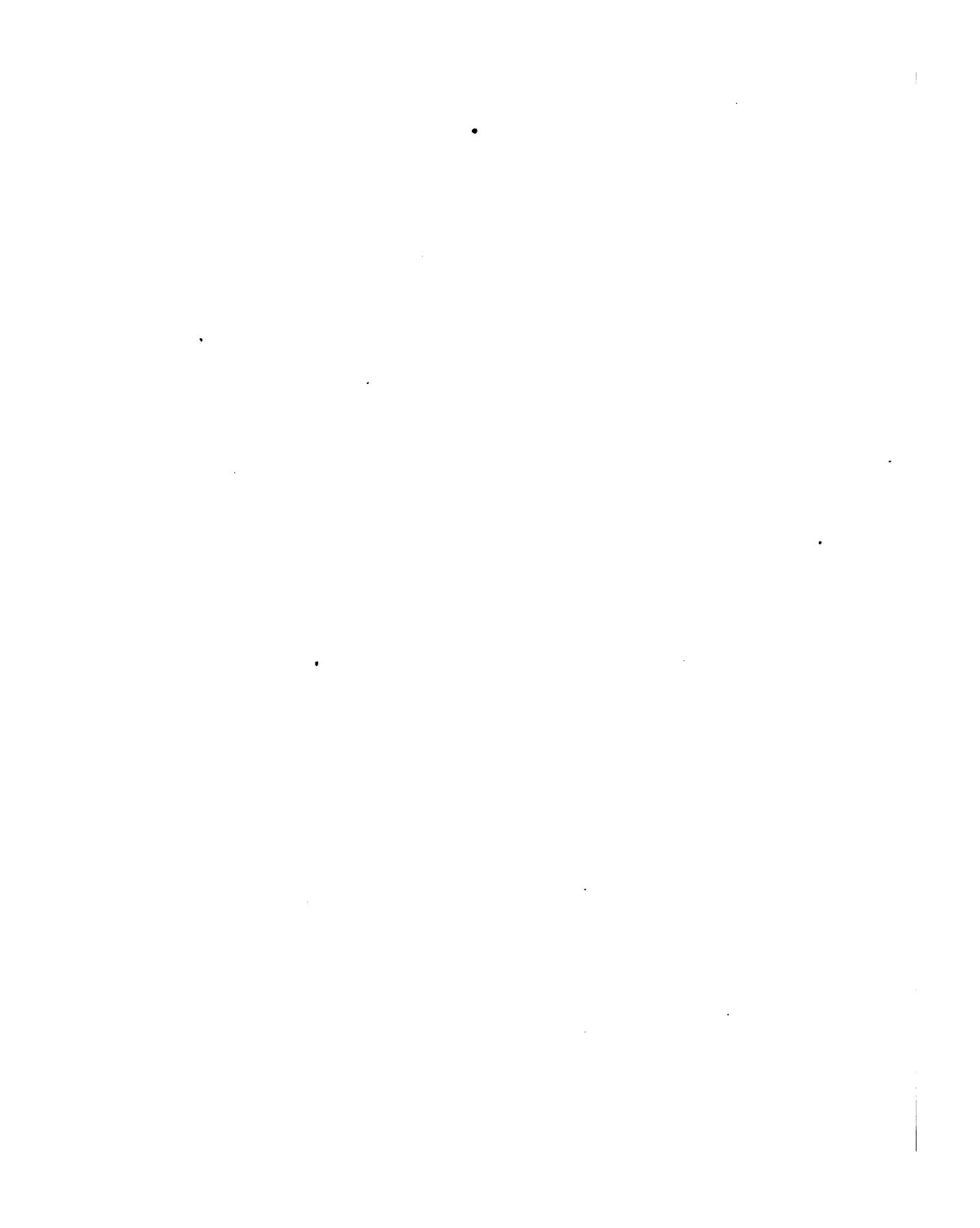
The melody belonging to these lines was quite in harmony with them, I assure you, and Madge and her sister, and Bobby as well, had sung it over at least three times each day since its composition, so as not to make a mistake when the time should come for surprising Auntie with it.

She was just about finishing the last verse on this particular afternoon, when in bounced, bounded, sprang or leaped, either description of his mode of entrance will answer—Master Bobby himself, with his usual salutation, “Hello!” Seeing the doll in Madge’s lap he paused, gave a long whistle of boyish contempt and began.

“Well, well, well! Madge Moore! You past ten most a month ago, and playing doll baby yet! Oh! oh!! oh!!!” Madge looked calmly up from her work, and replied. “Who is ten too, and likes playing with Margie’s box of nine-pins we played with long ago when we were little? So now, Bobby Reynolds!”



THE DOLL FOR TEDDY.



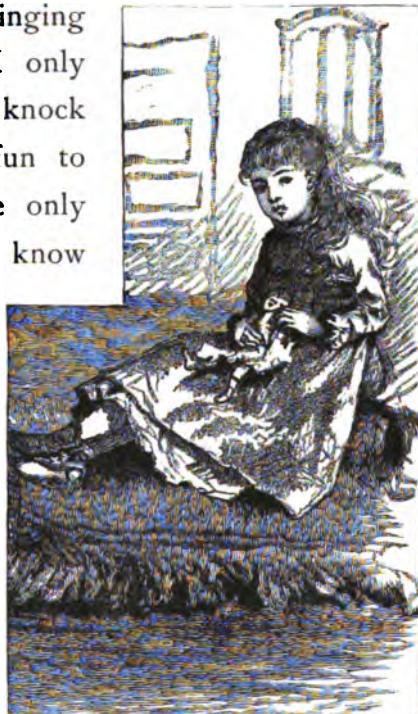
"Pooh," was Bob's answer, swinging himself around on one heel. "I only play with 'em 'cause I like to knock down things, you know. It's fun to knock down things. If you were only lucky enough to be a boy you'd know that 'thout my having to tell you!"

Now if any thing provoked Madge it was to have her sex spoken of "snubbingly," as she called it, and straightway she decided to punish Bob by teasing him, so she said :

"I was just going to explain about something, and you'd been awful glad to know part of what I was going to say ; but I sha'n't tell you a word 'cause you spoke so impolite, now, sir !"

"Impolitely would sound better, Miss Madge," retorted Bob, who had a great way of catching others when they tripped in grammar, and quite forgetting to look out for himself on the same ground. "I say, Madge, let's hear what you were going to tell, and we'll be friends again."

Madge was more indignant than ever, so she shook her head,



and resumed the humming of her song, while Bobby, half frantic with the thought that there was a secret being kept from him, flew out of the room to search for Margie. He found the little fair haired damsel, sitting on the lounge in the nursery, peacefully disrobing a battered doll whose clothes were far too nice for such a crippled figure.

"I say, Margie, I've got a new book, 'Dore's Fairy Tales.' Perfectly stunning! Uncle George gave it to me. Want to read it? I'll bring it round to-morrow."

Margie looked up gratefully.

"Oh thank you, Bob, I'd like it ever so much," she said.

Bob seated himself at her side and began again:

"Say, Margie, let's tell each other news, will you? You got any to tell me? I'll tell you something afterwards, you know."

Margie shook her head thoughtfully, and drew her brows together as though trying to think of something worth telling.

"I don't know any news to tell, Bobby," she presently said, and Bob was in despair. How should he ever manage to learn Madge's secret without appearing to care for it? He began to think that both girls were in league against him. However, he tried again.

"Found Madge playing with a doll down stairs. Wouldn't think you girls, when you're so old—you're only nine, but she's past ten—would like old dolls any more."

Margie laughed.

"Oh, you know we don't care 'bout 'em as much as we did, 'cause we think dolls are friv'lous things sometimes ; but you see, I 'spose Madge told you 'bout Teddie Starr's birthday, didn't she?"

Bob looked indifferent as he replied : "I came out in a hurry to find you, you see, and I s'pose she—she didn't have time to tell me."

"Well," resumed Margie, innocent of Madge's attempted punishment of Bob, which she was going to spoil, "well, Ted Starr just loves dolls, girl-dolls, I mean, for he hates boy-dolls, and his birthday comes next week, so Madge and I, we concluded to send him our middling best doll, Angelina, and Madge is sewing a skirt for it now, and I'm going to take this old thing's clothes and send too, 'cause they'll fit Angelina nicely. You see, Teddy won't make such a fuss and cry so about Birdie's coming on when he has the new dolly to pay attention to, and—"

Bob started up in surprise. "Birdie Starr coming on, and you never once told me about inviting her? Well, ain't you the meanest girl, Margie Moore! I guess you forgot we're most cousins, and I ought to know all the things you girls know."

Margie loooked distressed. "Why, Bobby, I thought of course you knew about it. Oh, such charming plans! Auntie only told us last night, and we s'posed Uncle George would tell you the firstest thing!"

"Ain't seen Uncle George since breakfast, and didn't see him then 'cause I was late down," was Bob's rejoinder as he tried to make Margie think he was "very mad," about his neglect, in hopes that she would begin to pet and coax him as she usually did when he was cross.

But the joy at the news, and the possibility of seeing his favorite Birdie soon again, drove the frown from his forehead in double quick time, and he sat down at the little girl's side again to listen as she told Auntie's plans which had made them all so happy.

"Oh, Bobby, wasn't Auntie Grace too lovely for any thing to think of making us all so glad?" began Margie eagerly. "You know the wedding's this month, the last week—"

Bob interrupted—"Guess I ought to know, when we've sung it in our song forever!" "Now don't be interrupting me, Bob Reynolds," replied Margie, "or I won't tell any more. Well, Auntie said why didn't we write and invite Birdie to come on now, and be here at the wedding, 'cause she'd like it ever so much, you see. So we children said could we? and she said yes; and we were the gladdest that ever could be! so we wrote a letter and papa he put it in the office for us when he went down town this morning."

Bob bounced up, and turned a somersault on the other end of the low lounge, by which performance his feet came in contact with Margie's back, and beside giving her a pretty hard knock, rolled her small figure off and upon the floor. It was only one

of those "knock down" games which Bobby liked so well, but as Margie was not a ninepin she speedily picked herself up and ruefully rubbed the bruised shoulder. Poor Bobby made no end of apologies, and even offered to rub her shoulder and back himself, and at last Margie was persuaded to "kiss and make up," and just then Madge sailed into the room still resolved on teasing Bob. But that young gentleman laughed a few tantalizing "ha's, ha's, ha's!" and Madge soon learned that her little sister had let the cat out of the bag innocently enough. There was nothing to be done, therefore, but for all three of them to rejoice together over Auntie's plans, and talk of the welcome they would give the little friend if only she would be allowed to come.



CHAPTER III.

BIRDIE'S LETTER AND THE RESULT.



VER the miles to Birdie went the letter which Madge and Margie wrote for her coming, and which was supplemented by one from Aunt Gracie and Papa. Uncle George had sent lots of messages in Auntie's letter, so that all the family of Starrs and Greys should be sure of the welcome the little girl would receive if she could come on to visit her city friends. Auntie

had written her letter to Mrs. Starr, and of course the invitation was extended to that lady as well as the older members of the family if they would accept.

It was such a sweet letter which Aunt Gracie wrote, do you want to hear it?

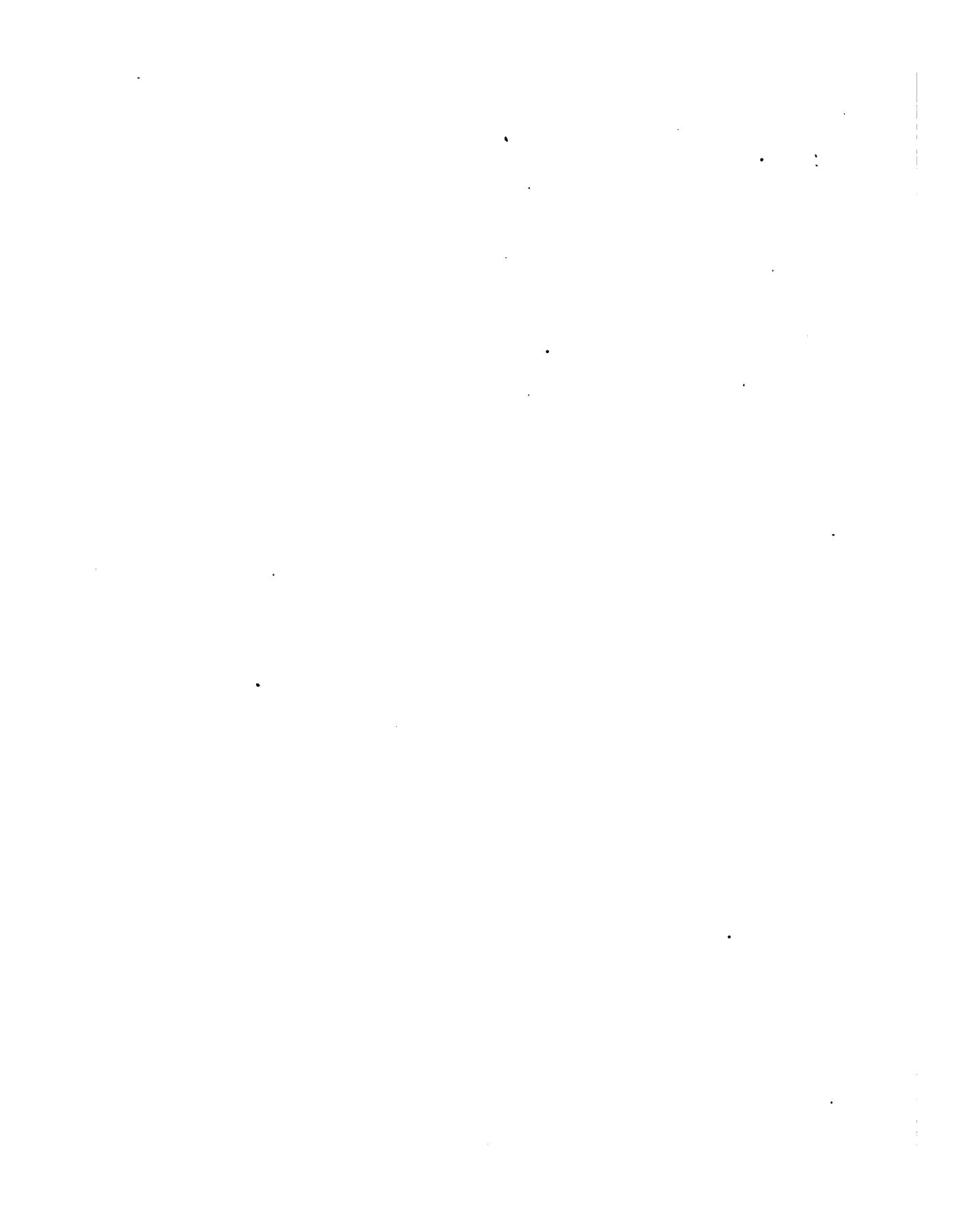
“ New York, May 18th.

“ MY DEAR MRS. STARR :

Birdie will receive the children's letter when this is handed to you, and I hope you will feel it best for her to accept our invita-



AUNTIE ADDS HER PETITION FOR BIRDIE.



tion. We all love the dear child so much, and I have adopted her, you know, long ago, as a precious little niece without whose sunny presence I don't know how I could go comfortably through the ceremony which is, despite the happiness it brings, a very solemn thing after all, is it not, dear friends.

As you know all the particulars by this time, I need not rehearse them here. I write simply to say that we shall welcome as many of you as will come on, or all of you if possible, but are earnestly anxious that Birdie should not disappoint us. I ask your loving prayers and wishes for me and mine, and beg you to believe me,

"Most affectionately and sincerely your very happy friend,

"GRACE MOORE."

As Bobby, not knowing of the letters, had not been able to send one with Madge's and Margie's, he added a postscript to the one he found Auntie folding for the next mail, in which he wrote.

"I say, dear old Bird! just spread your wings this way and fly with all your mite and mane to New York, cause we fellers are longing for you like a house a fire. I and Madge and Margie are going to teach you a new song.

"Good-by, lots of love and kisses from

"BOB."

"Poor little Bobbins!" thought Aunt Gracie, as she folded the "postscript" and slipped it into the folds of her own letter, "he

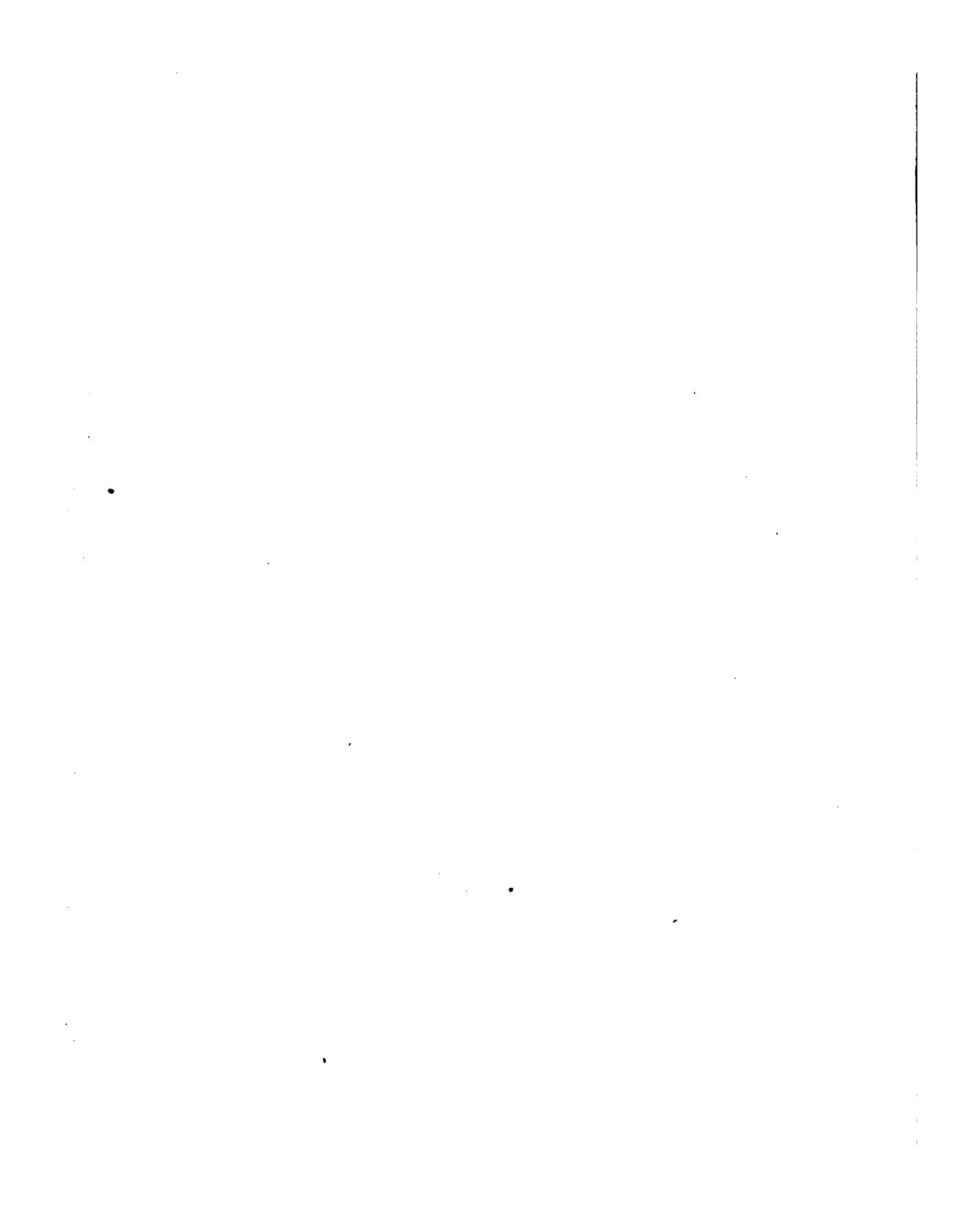
will spell correctly by and by, and after all, his spelling is the worst of his faults, dear little fellow!" So you see that Auntie had a very warm place in her indulgent heart for the small boy who would soon be her real nephew.

Well, the letters sped on their way, and one pleasant day, when the spring birds were giving the first concert of the season, and the air was soft as it ought to be in May, and the trees were growing white with blossom, and green with young leaves, little Miss Birdie was sitting comfortably in the swing at the foot of the orchard, singing all sorts of songs in "the sweetest voice," so Grandma declared—"that ever a child could have." Grandma was making cookies (you remember those cookies of Grandma Grey's, don't you? although you never tasted one except in imagination, and that's where Madge, Margie, Birdie and Bob have always had the best of you, my little readers.) Grandma was making those same nice cookies in the kitchen, and Birdie's sweet voice came floating in on the breezes and lingering in Grandma's ears and fond old heart all the time she was busy. Birdie was just as happy as a little "sunbeam" in May could be, and she was singing a happy little song too, which went this way:

Little sunbeams warm and bright,
Shining day by day,
Turning shadows into light,
Making all things gay.



IN THE SWING.



Oh, I love you, love you, love you !
And I love the skies above you !
For they send you down to me
To help me in my play.
Little sunbeams, merrily
Shining day by day.

Birdie sang her song over and over, and the swing went gently to and fro keeping time as she sang.

Suddenly she heard a call—"Birdie ! Birdie !"

"Oh, that's Mamma's voice !" said the little maiden as she didn't wait to "let the cat die," but jumped out in a trice and ran towards the house.

"Birdie ! where are you, dearie ? Birdie !!"

"Yes, Mamma, I'm hurrying like any thing right through the orchard," replied Birdie, whom the trees were hiding from mamma's eyes. And presently she had passed out into the broad clear space near the house, and ran to her mother's side all rosy and breathless.

There were letters in mamma's hand, and how long, think you, before Birdie found out which belonged to her, and was listening to their contents as mamma read each in turn? There were Madge's and Margie's, and the postscript from Bobby, for Birdie, and Auntie Gracie's for Mrs. Starr. We know their contents enough to be satisfied how they pleased Birdie. And then there

was the package for little Teddie,—the pretty Angelina who had come to help Teddie be brave and willing to let his sister leave him. Teddie was now a “four-year-older”—and Angelina found a warm and appreciative welcome at his hands.

While Birdie was in raptures over her letters of invitation to be present at the wedding, he sat down to hug his dolly and consider the wonders of its new wardrobe, and when by and by the little girl told him that she was going to New York and he must be very good and not cry when she left him, he looked up bravely, but with the big bright tears shining in the brown eyes, and plaintively answered: “All yite, Birdie, I’ll have to love Annyginal while you is born, I ’spose, but she tant tiss me when I tiss her, so don’t stay long from Teddie!”

Mrs. Starr could not very well leave home, and Grandma and Grandpa concluded that messages from them would give as much pleasure as their company since “they were only old folks,” as Grandma said laughingly. So Birdie was sent on alone, and was met at the depot, as before—by the juvenile Moores, assisted by Bobby, and escorted by the ever faithful Betty.



CHAPTER IV.

"WE ARE GOING SHOPPING."

HE three little girls were sitting together in the pleasant nursery, a few mornings after Birdie's arrival. They were having great fun over some puzzles which papa had brought home the night before and which taxed their patience and ingenuity to the utmost. To remove rings from a maze of wired labyrinth that seemingly "never had an opening," and to liberate balls from a case that appeared to be smaller than the imprisoned balls themselves, was no easy matter for our young people, and between laughter and vexation, determined wills to "do it spite of any thing," and a not very large stock of the necessary patience in the first place, you may be sure the minutes slipped rapidly by until Bobby appeared upon the scene and volunteered to show "how the thing was done, of course! it was no end easy."

But the girls began to think themselves the victims of misplaced confidence when after several fruitless efforts to unravel the mystery that young gentleman declared there was some mistake in the manufacture of the puzzles, and it wasn't worth while to "bother about 'em." He had come to say that he had decided

what kind of a wedding present to give Auntie Grace. He wouldn't give one to Uncle George, 'cause he was a man, and men didn't care about such trifling things. But he was going to buy a bracelet for Auntie, and mamma had suggested that it should contain, if possible, a little inserted locket with a lid, and "we three children could have our photographs taken together to put in it, for a surprise to Auntie," added the little boy, his eyes and face eager with the novelty of mamma's suggestion.

Madge thought it a beautiful plan, but Margie, true to the instincts of her kindly little heart, and her friendship for Birdie, warmly protested against leaving Birdie out of the arrangement. Birdie modestly replied that as she was, and would be, no real relation to Aunt Gracie, she wouldn't like to intrude her face in the group. Madge and Bobby instantly regretting their moment's neglect of her vehemently insisted that she was just the same as a real relation, and that the group wouldn't be complete without her.

"But isn't it the loveliest, tip-top plan that ever was?" asked Bobby, and added with filial loyalty that "no other lady in the world but mamma would have thought of such a thing as that for Auntie's present." Under other circumstances Madge and Margie might have declared that their Auntie was "a great deal smarter than even Mrs. Reynolds," but remembering that Bob's mother would also soon be a "relation," they agreed with her son that she was truly wonderful in invention, etc., etc.

It was agreed that the four little friends should go with Mrs. Reynolds the next day, on the secret expedition concerning the bracelet, and that reminded UNCLE GEORGE'S PUZZLE. NO. I. the girls that they also would like to buy presents for the bride-to-be. So they would make one grand shopping excursion of



QUEEN MARIE ANTOINETTE.

the afternoon viewing papa
essary funds,
him promise profound se-
Auntie.



NAPOLEON.

first inter-
for the nec-
and making
to keep it a
cret from

PORTRAITS OF THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON I., HIS WIFE, AND SON.
(From a picture painted in 1815.)

"Men do tell secrets so often!" exclaimed Madge, with lofty contempt, "it is never safe to trust 'em much!"

"Thank you, we don't tell secrets' any oftener than you women, so now!" resented Bobby with a dignified stretch of his small body towards the ceiling.

"Well," interrupted Birdie, "you ain't a man yet, and we ain't women, so we don't any of us tell secrets, and Mr. Moore's the bestest man that way I ever knew!"

She was rapturously kissed and hugged by papa's little daughters for that speech, and then the luncheon bell rang to put an end to further discussion. That evening Uncle George came in as usual, and saying that Bobby had told of his experience with the wire puzzles that morning, he had brought two with him which were found among some old papers, and which he was sure would please the little girls as they had delighted Bobby.

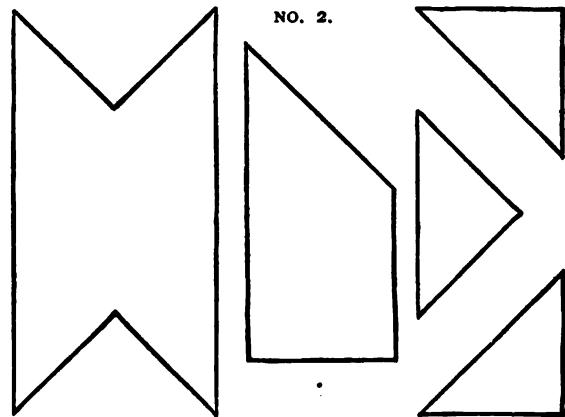
"Couldn't Bob have come to-night?" asked Madge.

"No indeed;" was the reply, "he is in bed by this time I grieve to say, for the reason that—that bed seems to be the best place for naughty children to reflect upon and repent of their naughtiness."

The girls looked grave, and Birdie especially was very anxious. "Oh, what did he do?" she questioned, and Uncle George replied: "Well, he had a grudge against the waitress, and when she drank her tea—or rather attempted to drink it this evening—she was half strangled with the red pepper which my hopeful nephew had put into it. She really suffered a great deal, and Bob's mother very properly sent him to bed. Now come, let's see who can guess these puzzles!"

"Poor old Bobby!" sighed Madge, "he's always doing queer things!"

"I should think that Annie Jane needn't have gone and told on him, the mean thing! if he did just play her a little joke!" was Margie's opinion indignantly spoken. Birdie was silent but she did considerable thinking, and resolved to be extra kind and polite to Bobby when he came next time, to pay him for having suffered punishment, though "it was kind of cruel to burn the waitress with red pepper."



*"Now for the first of my puzzles!" cried Uncle George. "Whoever first discovers among the flowers the portraits which are mentioned beneath the picture, shall search a certain coat pocket I know of for bonbons." "Pooh, I see 'em!" exclaimed Madge, pointing to the shadow profiles plainly visible.

"No, I don't mean those. Look among the flowers," was Uncle George's reply. There was much knitting of brows, and much gravity of feature, to say nothing of the "Oh dear's!" and "Do you see it's?" heard every few minutes. I dare say my little readers can discover the likenesses hidden in the picture much quicker than could our four little friends who were consoled by the fact that neither Auntie nor papa were any cleverer than they.

**(See page 33.)*

However, at last Margie discovered the portrait of Napoleon's son right in the middle of the bunch. (Can you?) And later on papa made out those of the Emperor and his wife a little higher up. To Margie was given the chance to search for the bonbons, and to papa was offered the glorious privilege of opening the package for the impatient little people. Certainly that puzzle was considered ingenious enough to delight grown as well as young people, and puzzle No. 2 was brought forth with much interest.

From a small envelope Uncle George took several pieces of smooth white card board which he laid upon the table "helter skelter," as Margie described it.

"Now then, little folks, make me a cross, just a plain old fashioned cross," he said.

"Let me try first," said Madge—but Uncle George was seized with an idea and delayed operations until he could duplicate the pieces and thus give all a chance to try.

"There you are," he laughed, "now who'll make the correct cross first, and—let me see—and give the first kiss, as a reward, you know, to the bride, ahem!—two weeks from now?"

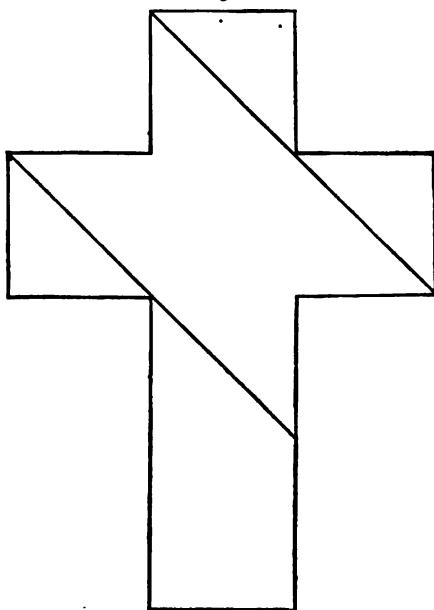
Up jumped all the children. "The idea!" cried Birdie, "just 's if we wouldn't *all* be first!" and the sisters echoed her indignant protest against any such limited performance as that.

Uncle George shielded his face with both hands, as though expecting to have his ears boxed, but the children sat down again,

after kissing Auntie a few times in anticipation of the grand event to come, and began at the cross puzzle. It baffled them all, however, and Uncle George had to show them the secret of it as you see by this cut No. 3. He showed them that the puzzle was made by simply two cuts of the scissors across the whole cross, and presently the little girls had made two or three puzzles of the same all by themselves.

Bed-time arrived promptly, and reluctantly the three pairs of little feet wended their way up the staircase followed by Betty's more substantial feet, and quicker gait, for the inevitable "cousin" had called, and was waiting down in the kitchen, and Bridget had taken her "evening out," so that no wonder Miss O'Toole was anxious to be "afther gettin' the darlins in bed as aisy and soon as possible."

No. 3.



CHAPTER V.

SELECTING THE PRESENTS.



ERY early the next morning Bobby was watching the skies to see if there were indications of rain. Not that he would have minded shopping in the "pouringest rain that ever was," but then thought he, "girls are so different from fellers! They're so scared if a rain drop gets on their clothes or feathers! Girls can't be counted on for rainy days out doors!"

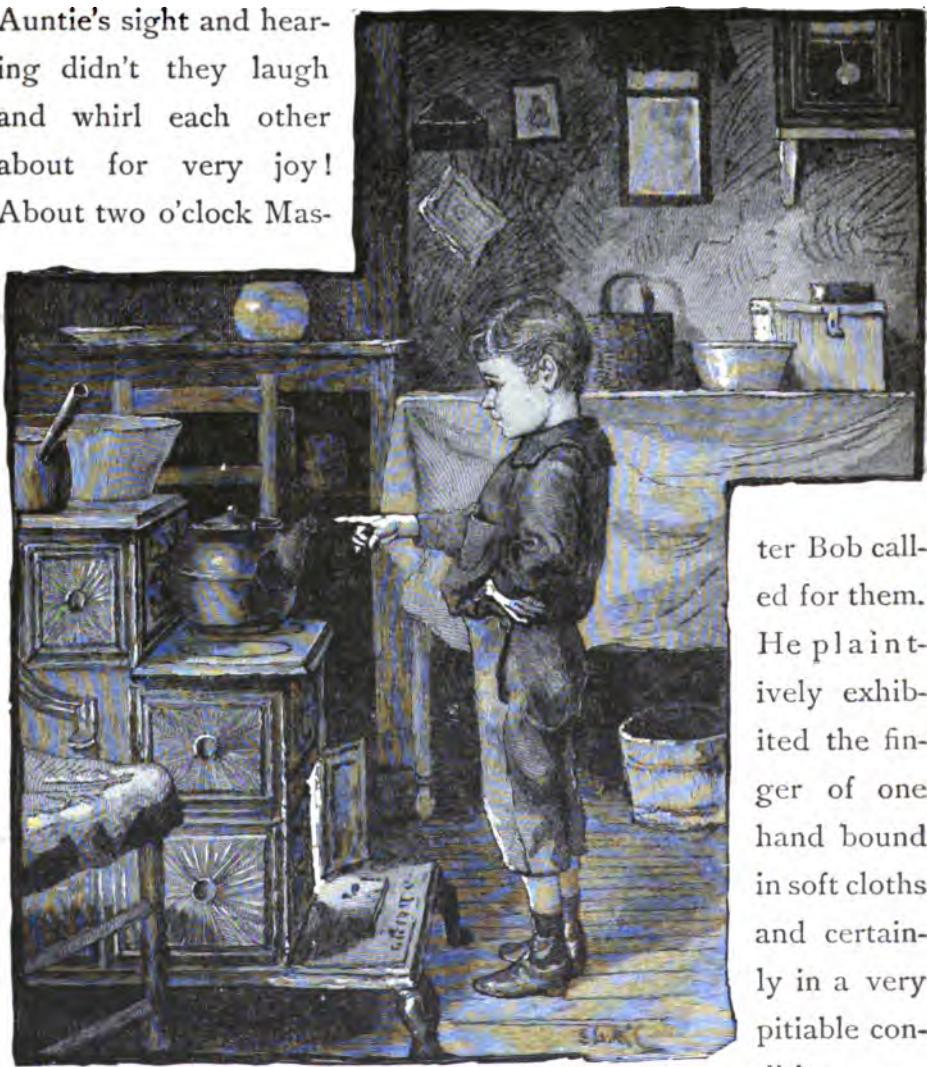
However, it proved to be a pleasant morning with every indication

for an afternoon after the same pattern, and Bobby was in the best of spirits when he started for school with a note from mamma in his pocket for the teacher, in which was the request that "Bobby should be dismissed as early as possible after the morning recitations."

Meanwhile the little girls had had a secret consultation with papa in the library, during which he had resorted to his pocket book pretty freely, and made suggestions of which some were scorned by the trio of maidens—and some accepted with thanks. As for little Birdie, papa had hard work to make her accept a share of the general "present fund," for had she not in her little new pocket book—(Grandpa's parting gift when she left home,) two crisp five dollar bills! And how, she wondered, could she spend part of that sum more satisfactorily than in some little gift of love to Auntie Grace?

After papa had gone down town, Madge and Margie went to school, and Birdie and Auntie made themselves agreeable to each other until with the hour of noon the little sisters came merrily home. Meanwhile Auntie had received a note from Mrs. Reynolds asking if the children could go out with her that afternoon, and promising to take good care of them. Oh, how hard Madge and Margie and Birdie did try to keep the tell-tale dimples out of their cheeks, and the merriment of their little plot out of their bright eyes, as they listened to Auntie while she read them Mrs. Reynolds' note. Of course she never dreamed that it had all been "cut and dried" beforehand by those innocent children who appeared to be so surprised and delighted over the invitation to go out with Mrs. Reynolds. So she gave her consent, and the children thanked her quietly enough. But when they were out of

Auntie's sight and hearing didn't they laugh and whirl each other about for very joy!
About two o'clock Mas-



ter Bob called for them. He plaintively exhibited the finger of one hand bound in soft cloths and certainly in a very pitiable condition.

"How did it happen?" was the question, and Bobby had to

explain that when he came home from school, he went down to the kitchen to tell cook to "hurry up luncheon 'cause mamma said so," and seeing the steam pouring out of the nose of the kettle it occurred to him to show Annie, the waitress, how brave he could be about being burned, and "how shamed she should be for making such a fuss about the pepper he put in her tea last night." So he held one finger right in the steam and——oh ! didn't it burn the poor little finger though ! I am afraid that Annie didn't think much of his bravery when she heard him yell at the top of his lungs "oh jiminy !" as he blew on the burned member to cool it, and raced up stairs to find comfort in mamma's sympathy.

However, he felt repaid for the burn, and less foolish about the manner of bringing it about, when he found himself a sort of hero to be petted, pitied, condoled with and consoled by the gentle little Birdie and Margie, who had not yet forgiven the waitress for having had Bobby sent to bed for his joke upon her with red pepper. Bobby loftily declared that "he didn't mind going to bed so early, it did him good to rest, and he went right to sleep, and it hurried up to-day, you know." Well, by and by they were all off, the little band of shoppers, and Mrs. Reynolds was waiting for them at her door.

I cannot begin to tell you of all the fun they had that afternoon. You can imagine them all at Tiffany's selecting just the particular style of dainty bracelet that they fancied would suit and

please Auntie. It wasn't easy, you see, to find one with a locket inserted in the band, though there were plenty to be had with pendent lockets and charms.

But finally they selected one which was very beautiful, and the little case with its jeweled lid was quite large enough to hold the group of four sweet young faces which Auntie loved so dearly. That was Bobby's gift you know, the bracelet, and he drew a long breath of relief when it was finally in mamma's possession. Then Madge took her turn and chose for a dainty little lace pin, a small golden dove with outstretched wings, bearing the olive branch in its bill. The olive branch was exceedingly fine and delicate in manufacture, and Mrs. Reynolds congratulated the little girl on her selection.

"You see, Auntie somehow always seems like a dove of peace in our family," said Madge, "and I think she ought to wear a sort of badge about it, don't you!"

They all agreed with Madge, and Margie looked about for her choice. Birdie was hard to please, but finally she decided on a beautiful ivory and silver mouchoir case, delicately perfumed with the fragrance of violets, and lined with quilted blue satin. Then Margie, who all this time had been going about the store, looking and looking, yet not being able to decide among so many lovely things, at last declared in favor of an exquisite flower stand, in the middle of which fine spun glass, to represent a true fountain, rose

and fell gracefully down into the little basin intended to receive cut flowers. The design was new, and the workmanship very beautiful. Our four shoppers felt as did Mrs. Reynolds, their chaperon, that they had reason to congratulate themselves on their bargains, and viewed their diminished funds complacently.

"Now for the photograph gallery!" said Mrs. Reynolds, and thither went the group laughing and happy as dear children should be.

I cannot take time or space to describe the doings at the gallery: the fun, the laughter, the final settlement as to position, etc., but you may be sure it was a very charming group which was prepared for Auntie's bracelet, and Mrs. Reynolds would receive it finished in a few days.

After that the party visited the *Eden Musee* on Twenty-third street, and were delighted with all they saw. One or two things happened which made our little folks feel, as Bob expressed it, "sheepish," and if you wont laugh at them too much, I'll tell you what they were.

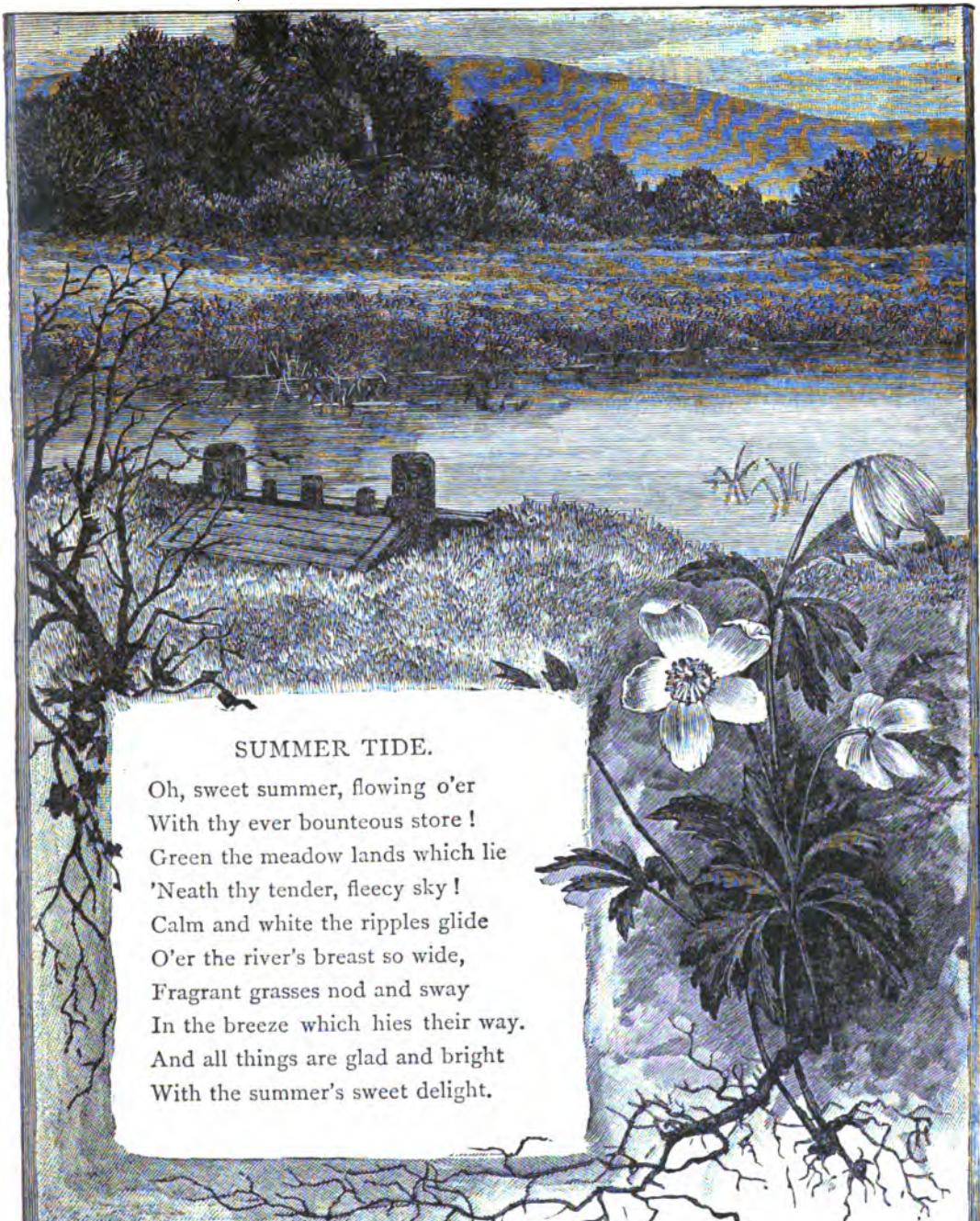
As they entered the door from the street, Margie looked about her and then suddenly clutching Mrs. Reynolds' dress whispered, "I think that's the rudest man! he's staring at us all the time. I don't want to be near him. Like as not he'll ask me my name." Bobby heard her and boldly volunteered to protect his friend. So he marched up to the rude man and said, "Look here, sir, you

mustn't frighten that little girl over there"—then he checked himself, took a good look at the man he was addressing, turned very red in the face and walked off with an "Oh, pshaw ! Margie, ain't you easily fooled by a wax figure!"

On another occasion, Bobby politely asked a gentleman against whom he had pushed accidentally to excuse him, and was quite embarrassed to find that he had addressed a waxen individual.

Mrs. Reynolds didn't care to take the children down to the "crypt," as it is called, for reasons of her own which were good no doubt, and so we need not question them, but they saw plenty to admire in the first hall, and in the views up stairs. They had some ice cream, and listened to some fine music before leaving the building and finally went home rejoicing over their afternoon's work, and tired enough to long for bed time, strange to say.





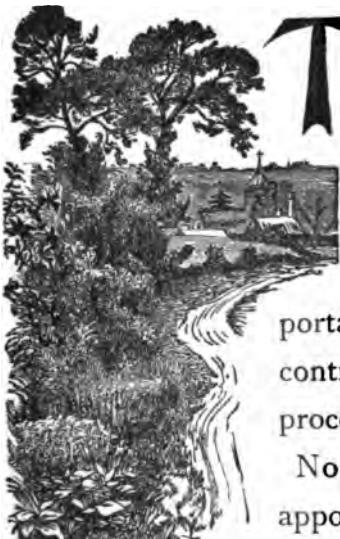
SUMMER TIDE.

Oh, sweet summer, flowing o'er
With thy ever bounteous store !
Green the meadow lands which lie
'Neath thy tender, fleecy sky !
Calm and white the ripples glide
O'er the river's breast so wide,
Fragrant grasses nod and sway
In the breeze which lies their way.
And all things are glad and bright
With the summer's sweet delight.



CHAPTER VI.

THE WEDDING, ETC.



HERE never had dawned a more perfect day, I think, than that all important one of Auntie's wedding. There was just such a stir in the house as pleased Madge and Bobby, and gave them opportunities to don airs of importance, while Margie and Birdie, on the contrary, kept together and timidly viewed proceedings from a respectful distance.

No doubt Bob and Madge were a little disappointed that Auntie did not look pale and tearful, and show an inclination to "faint or something"—according to their expectations, but truly she did neither of those things. On the contrary, when the bridal party moved up the broad church aisle, Auntie Grace was more composed than any of them. There were one or two relatives staying at Mrs. Morris's, of course, and at Mrs. Reynolds' house as well, and they and the younger members of the family were gathered about the bride and groom during the

ceremony. My little readers can imagine how pretty, and more than usually sweet, Madge, Margie and Birdie looked at that time, and as for Bobby, he resembled a young prince, in his fine black velvet suit, with the short pants buckled closely about his knees and his handsome silk stockings showing to advantage the round plump limbs which could "beat any feller in a race," as their owner often boasted. Over the well-fitting jacket a broad white collar rolled easily, and white cuffs were just visible below the wrist. The usually tangled brown curls were for once in order on the boy's fine head, and his eyes were glowing like stars as he watched the ceremony which was giving him a legal right to love Auntie Grace, and kiss her all he wanted to. (Did I ever tell you that Bobby was a great kisser? Well, he was, and if you don't believe it, ask Birdie, she knows, and Margie and Madge as well.)

At last the minister pronounced the benediction and Bobby who had it all planned to give the bride the first kiss, was quietly anticipated by Uncle George who was old-fashioned enough in his ideas to consider that "first kiss" the next best thing to the wedding service, and accordingly claimed his rights without delay. But Bobby came next and the little girls contented themselves with loving looks into the dear bride's happy eyes, and meekly followed down the aisle behind the older friends.

It was hard, and no mistake, when the hour came which would leave the home circle for over one week without its chief sunbeam

and comfort, but then there was this satisfaction, the week would surely slip by, and with the beginning of another, the newly-married couple were to return and for a little time things would go on just as before, only that Uncle George would be with them all the days instead of just coming for a while each evening.

And after that—oh ! after that ! It made the four little friends just hold their breaths and clasp their hands in mute rapture when they thought of it. Why ? oh, because it had all been planned that Auntie Grace and Uncle George, “the loveliest, bestest, sweetest, dearest, and宝贵est Uncle and Auntie in all the whole wide world !” were not to travel selfishly alone together during the summer, but considered it absolutely necessary for their happiness that the little nieces and nephew should accompany them. As for Birdie ! well, Auntie Grace had written letters about Birdie before, and she guessed she could do it again ! Every one knew what that meant, and Uncle George kept up a constant inward sort of chuckle which convinced the household that he favored Auntie’s style of letter-writing.

So the week in which another auntie took charge of Mr. Moore’s family was pleasantly endured, and did—as all weeks do—finally slip out of sight, and gave the next one a chance to welcome home the bride and groom.

You can imagine better than I can tell you what a shout of joy went up from four little throats on the glad morning which brought

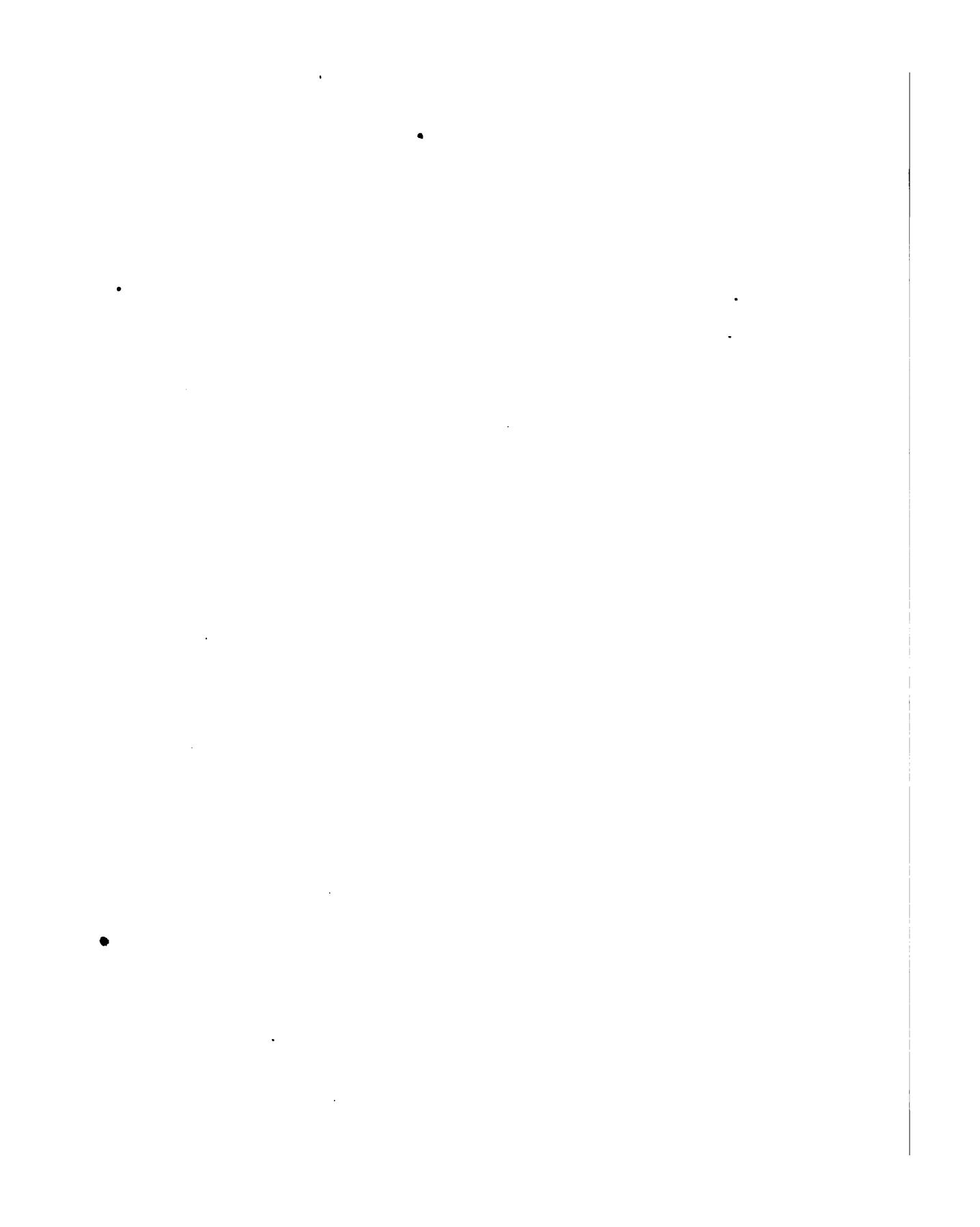
Aunt Gracie and Uncle George home again. Papa declared at last that he would just as soon be in "Chatterbox hall" and "Bedlam," in fact, for his very ears ached with the noise of those four tongues which seemed trying to outwag each other.

But before the day had fairly passed, Madge grew tired of talking, sobered down and finally went to bed with a headache, while Margie and Birdie, glad to get rid of Bobby, who went home with Uncle George to help him tell mamma "about the whole concern," —went to the nursery and enjoyed an hour of perfect peace among the dolls.





THE SUMMER SONG.



CHAPTER VII.

THE SUMMER SONG.



SHEEP.

IRDIES, birdies, what do you think ?
Isn't the summer here ?
Isn't it, think you, time to play
'Neath the summer skies so clear ?
When you flew up to the clouds to-day,
What did the white cloud-fairies say ?"

BIRDS.

"Sheepie, sheepie, as true as you live
The summer is here at last,
And over the field the daisies white,
And the buttercups grow fast.
And we've just come from the skies so blue
To sing the glad, glad news to you."

That was the song mamma was singing to Teddie one bright morning in June, as she sat in the porch with her little boy in her lap, and a large picture look balanced on his fat knees. "Is dose sheepies askin' anysin' to dose 'ittle birdies, Mamma ? and is dose birdies doin' ' chip, chip' to de sheepies ?" was the question which

brought forth the song, which clever mamma improvised for lack of a better answer.

All over the landscape danced the beautiful sunshine of the new born summer, and mamma was just thinking of the absent little daughter and wondering when she would receive the glad tidings of the homeward flight of her own sweet bird, when Trip, who had made his usual visit to the post office, came bounding up the road and presently dropped a letter at Mrs. Starr's feet.

"It would be more polite, Trip, if you would *hand* me your letters instead of dropping them for me to pick up," said she. "I am ashamed of your bringing up."

Trip looked despondent and hung his head.

"Never mind, dear old doggie," said his mistress, in a moment, having discovered that she had *two* letters in the one envelope, one from Birdie, the other from Aunt Gracie. "Never mind; do the best you can, and I forgive you," patting Trip's head which was instantly lifted again, while the stump of a tail wagged furiously.

Teddie was neglected for a brief season while mamma read these two letters, and we will read them too. Birdie's first, because of course it was No. 1 in the mother's eyes and of course was kissed before even opened.

"**M Y D E A R, D E A R M A M M A:**

Such a lovely plan! Oh *I* can't tell you about it, but Auntie is going to write and ask you something. Guess, Mamma, before you

read her letter, cause I most know you'll read mine firstest of all—what she is going to ask you.

"If you say yes, I'm going home to kiss you all good-by, and hug you lots, cause I wouldn't feel happy to go any where without that, you know. Oh dear lovely mamma, *do* say yes to Auntie's letter. But I love you, love you, love you, moren I can say.

"Good-by, your own,

"BIRDIE."

Mamma was quite able to "guess" before opening Auntie's letter, the "lovely plan" Birdie had mentioned, and I am afraid I must tell the honest truth and admit that there were some very bright tears in her eyes before the little loving note which Birdie's hand had penned was laid aside. Then came the following.

New York City, June 5, 1884.

MY DEAR FRIEND, MRS. STARR:

"I am afraid you will think me a great beggar, for I am so constantly wishing to borrow or beg your treasure, little Birdie. But really if you could only know how perfectly happy the dear girls are together, and how we do love that special treasure of yours, you would forgive my begging propensities and excuse a repetition of the fact. I ask the favor this time that Birdie may join us on a summer jaunt my husband and I have planned for our mutual

pleasure. My brother is obliged to go to Liverpool on business and so we, who are determined to have a good time too, propose to travel hither and thither, and rusticate awhile in the mountains, wherever we chance to drift. I assure you that Birdie shall be well taken care of, and the dear child, as soon as she could make up her mind to be parted so long from you, seemed to grow as excited over the plans proposed as my little nieces did. If you consent, Birdie will return to you next week and say good-by to you all. If you will kindly allow her to return the following Monday, I should like to take the early morning train on Tuesday for E——ville, which as you know is in the Shewanaugunk mountains, and where my husband has engaged rooms high up the mountain side in a regular farm house. The children will have 'lots of sport, and jolly times,' as Bob says, and we'll try to bring Birdie home to you by and by as brown as a berry, and fat as my Margie, who is really stouter than Birdie now. We will write you from there, and let you know our next move, for we do not wish to stay long at any place.

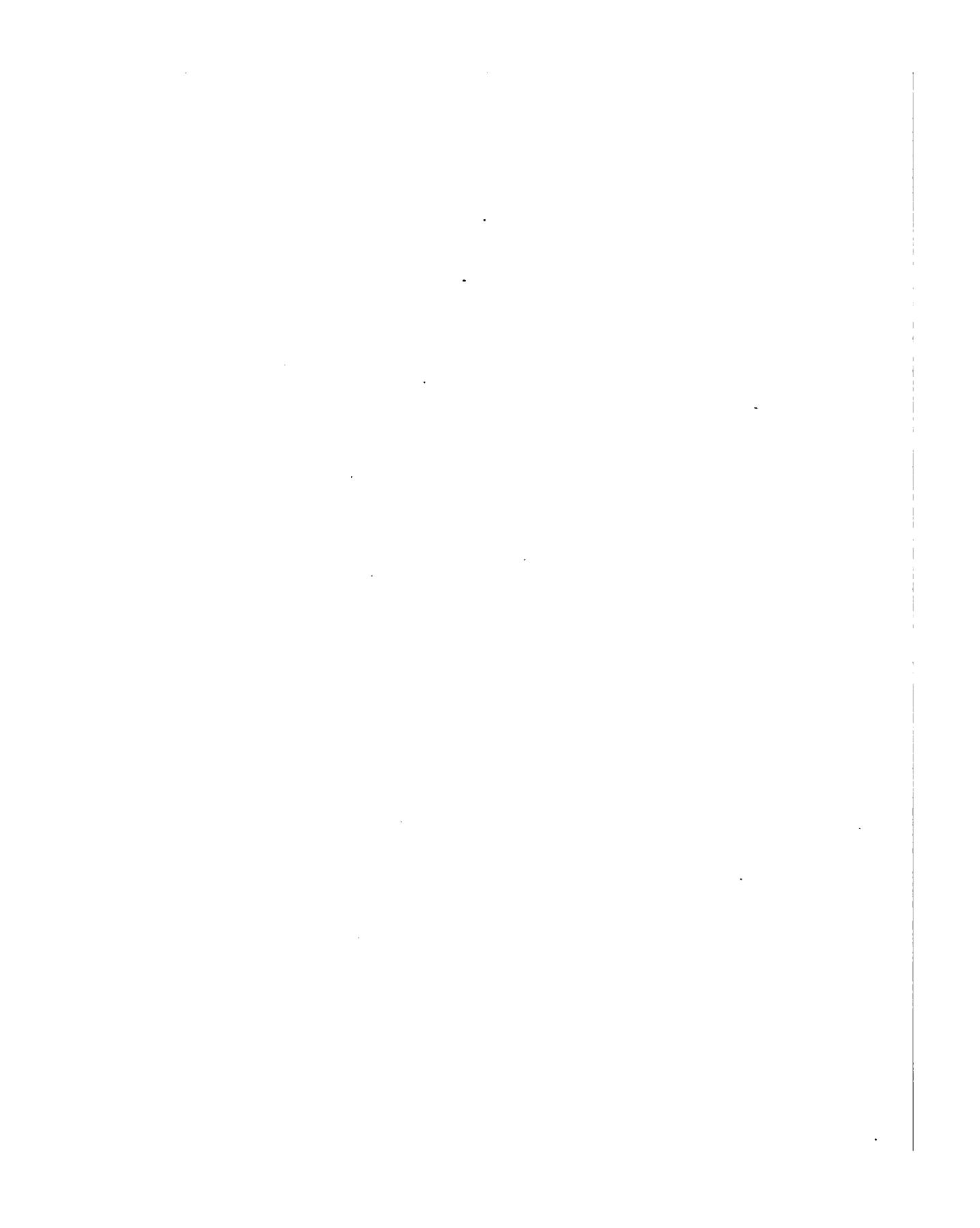
"Now I must close with much love to you all, and a kiss to dear little Teddie from,

"AUNTIE GRACE."

Well, mamma folded that letter also, and winked back some more tears which were ready to make their appearance, and bowed her face on Teddie's bright head for a minute or so, that he

MAMMA IS THINKING





might not see how sad she felt. Of course she felt sad, how could she help it, when she thought of a summer without Birdie to add to her own particular share of its sunshine and sweet bird music? To be sure, she might refuse to let her little girl go so far away. She could answer Auntie's letter with the kindest of thanks for its invitation for Birdie, and yet say that she thought it would be better for Birdie to remain at home with her. But then, the dear child would be disappointed, the other little folks would also be sadly disappointed, and Auntie Grace and Uncle George who had so kindly and thoughtfully taken the dear little girl into their plans, would no doubt sincerely regret having raised such happy expectations since they could not be realized.

So, Mrs. Starr, after thinking it all over, while Teddie looked at his picture book and failed to observe how quiet mamma had suddenly grown, decided at last that she could not spoil the anticipated pleasure for her darling Birdie, and that she would try and be happy without her this time, as before, when Birdie had spent part of a winter in the city, only then there had been but a short distance between them, whereas now,—“oh dear!” thought mamma: “how far away my little bird will fly from the home nest !”

Teddie had grown sleepy, and when he had been laid in his little crib for a long, sweet nap, Mrs. Starr walked down the road a little way and hid herself in a lovely nook close by the river,

where she could think the matter all over again and see if there could be any possible excuse for her to change her mind, and be selfish after all.

She looked very sweet and sad as she sat there on the bank, with the sunlight flooding her head and shoulders, as it flickered through the leaves of the many trees around. Birdie always thought she had the sweetest and prettiest mother ever any little girl was blessed with, and I think if the child could have peeped in through the bushes, and have seen mamma just as she sat so mournfully beside the river, with a tear or two rolling down her cheeks, and her dark eyes looking so sadly at things which were in themselves so gay and bright, as if those eyes were wondering how any thing could be bright without little Birdie's presence,—if Birdie I say, could have seen mamma just at that time—I think she would have flown into her arms and cried : "No ! no ! I will not leave you, dear, dear Mamma, for all the lovely trips in the world !" But Birdie was *not* there, you see, and Mrs. Starr had to think it all out alone, and the result was that she decided just as she had before.

"I will not be so selfish. Birdie will have a good time, and she shall not lose the opportunity." Then she went back to the cottage, and answered both the letters, and grandma and grandpa, who had been told all about matters, each sent loving messages. Grandpa was to drive to the depot to meet Birdie on the coming

Monday. She would be with her family through that week, and return to New York the next Monday, according to Auntie's suggestion. Grandpa and little Teddie drove to the village and posted mamma's letters, and so that matter was settled at last.



CHAPTER VIII.

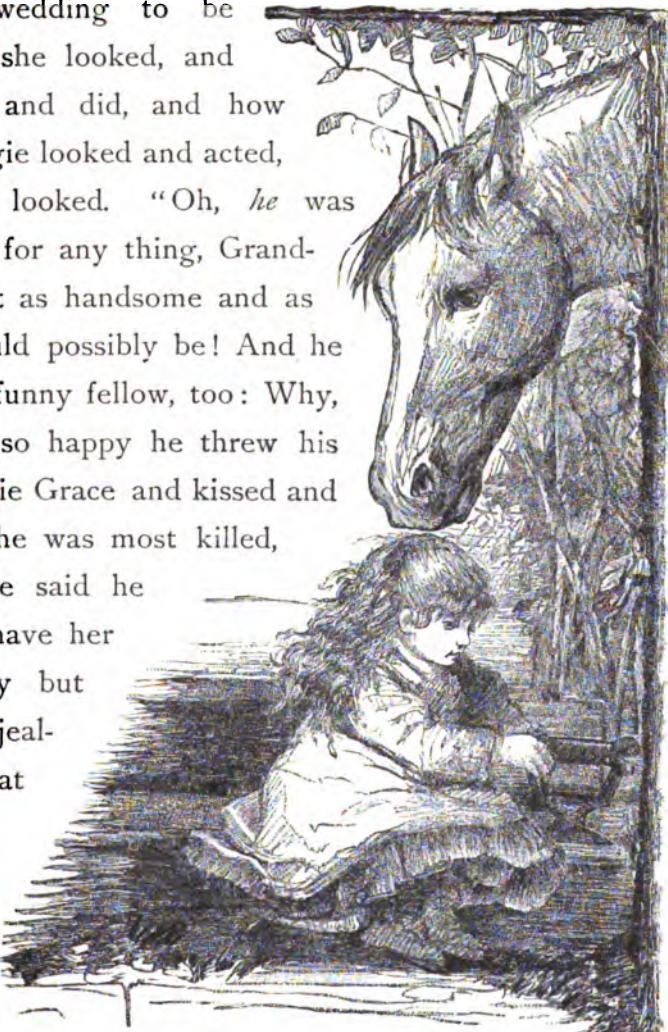
THE "GOOD-BY" VISIT.



HE good-by visit was longed for as eagerly by Birdie as by her mother, and when the train from New York shot into the station at Milford on the afternoon of that Monday when grandpa was waiting to welcome his darling, no happier little face was seen than hers as she flew out of the car and along the platform right into dear grandpa's arms. Even Dobbin pricked up his ears and turned his head around to receive Birdie's pat on his soft old nose, and the neighbors who were standing about, all had a hearty word of welcome for the little girl who was known as "Sunbeam" all over the village. Trip for a wonder had not followed the wagon, but Birdie knew she would find him at the gate barking his stumpy tail almost off for very joy.

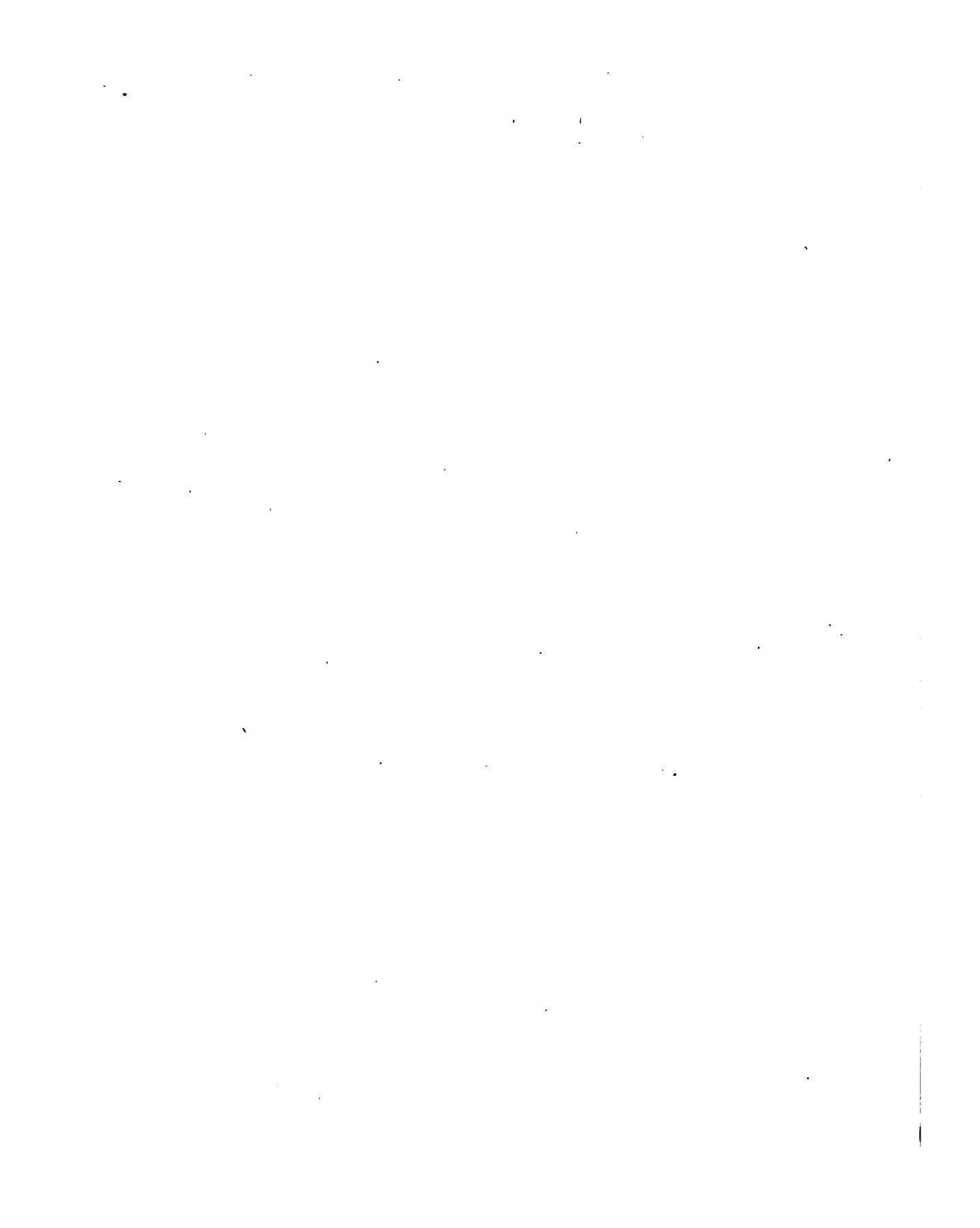
Such a chatterbox tongue as Birdie's! Over the roads they drove rapidly, while grandpa listened delightedly to the sound of

the sweet voice he loved so well. How much there was to tell about Auntie's wedding to be sure! Just how she looked, and what she wore, and did, and how Madge and Margie looked and acted, and how Bobby looked. "Oh, *he* was just too splendid for any thing, Grandpa! He was just as handsome and as nice, as a boy could possibly be! And he was such a jolly, funny fellow, too: Why, Grandpa, he was so happy he threw his arms around Auntie Grace and kissed and hugged her till she was most killed, and Uncle George said he wasn't going to have her kissing any body but him, or he'd get jealous, and then that Bobby—what do you think he did? Why, he just said he was going to marry *me* when he



grew up, so as to make me a real relation too, and I said no, I thank you, 'cause I felt so 'shamed, and Margie said he'd better wait till he got into long pants 'fore he felt so big, and—and—oh! we had such fun, Grandpa!" Birdie had a chance to breathe after her long speech, while grandpa laughed at her story, and presently they came in sight of the farm house porch in the distance, and Birdie knew that as soon as mamma and grandma and Teddie and Trip heard the sound of the wagon wheels, they would all rush out from the shady porch and welcome the returned Bird of the family. And that is what they all did, sure enough, and Birdie was welcomed to her heart's content. Then by and by, in the cool shadiness of mamma's own room, the story to which grandpa had listened was told over again, and this time it was mamma and grandma who laughed heartily.

That was a very busy week at the farm house, for, you know, Birdie's wardrobe had to be prepared, though it was only a simple one as best became a little country girl, and there was much to be done in the way of walks with mamma and Teddie, and good-by frolics, and oh! I can't tell what—before the little bird should spread its wings once more and fly away. Teddy had to be especially entertained, so Birdie decided, because he would not see sister for so long a time, and the little fellow lorded it over her well, you may be sure. She was obliged to invent stories by the dozen for the pictures in his scrap-book, and read over and over again,





"LAZY DICK!"

until sometimes her poor little tongue ached from hard work, such rhymes and stories as were printed there beneath the pictures. One was so funny, and Teddie liked it so well, that I will repeat both picture and verses for your benefit.

Two little children on the shed.

One was Dick, the other, Daisy.

One was clever, so 'twas said,

One, alas, was dull and—lazy.

Couldn't spell his name ! dear me !

How could a child so lazy be ?

There 'twas written right before him,

D—I—C—K.

But such a sleepy fit came o'er him,

Presently he slipped away

Into the “land o' nod,” dear me !

How could a child so sleepy be ?

“Do open your eyes !” cried little Daisy,

“And learn to spell your name ” ! alas !

Dick only said he felt too lazy.

And then, what think you, came to pass ?

He snored so loud, *she* jumped ! dear me !

How could a child so—*snorey* be ?

Two little children on the shed,

And one was Dick, the other Daisy.

And one got off at last, 'twas said,

It wasn't Dick, *he* was too lazy !
But Daisy left him there, dear me !
And so would I, if I'd been she.

You may not think that a very pretty rhyme, but Teddie considered it "puffly lovely," and Birdie thought every thing lovely



that pleased her little brother, so it was sung over and over to various improvisations of melody according to Birdie's words, and the moral of the story so impressed Teddie that he inwardly resolved to shun laziness all his life

There was also another very pretty picture in Teddie's scrap-book which I will show you, with the verses, for Birdie herself was

partial to them, and "the picture girl," as Teddie called it—looked so much like Birdie it was almost as if she had really been the original little model. The title of the picture was "Fast Asleep," and mamma had fitted the words to a sweet melody she had heard once, so that it could be sung as a lullaby to the Teddie-boy when he was fretful and needed some special soothing.

FAST ASLEEP !

All day long she has played in the shine
 Of the beautiful sunbeams bright,
All day long she has sung with the birds,
 From her dear little heart so light.
All day long she has played with the flowers,
 And frolicked with sunshine and breeze.
Till now she is tired, and rests awhile,
 Under the cool green trees.

Softly the sunbeams come flickering down,
 Sweetly the birdies sing :
While the fairies of slumberland gather around
 Their lullaby chimes to ring.
Slowly the blue eyes are hiding away
 'Neath the soft lids so white,
Till up-up-up to the Dreamland away,
 Effie has taken her flight.

Fast asleep in the meadow so fair
Under the soft blue skies ;
Fast asleep in the cool, green shade,
Is the child with the " soft blue " eyes.
Shine, ye sunbeams, shimmer and shine !
And sing ye birdies, sing !
But Effie will sleep till the fairies cease
Their lullaby chimes to ring.



CHAPTER IX.

BIRDIE TAKES FLIGHT AGAIN.



EARLY on the morning of the day of Birdie's departure for New York again, she was up and out of doors. Mamma and grandma were busy packing the little trunk, and grandpa was in the barn. Teddie was fast asleep yet, and Trip had scampered off to investigate the morning toilets of the hens in the hen house near at hand.

That his manner of investigation was not satisfactory to the hens and chickens was quite evident to Birdie by the loud cackling and sounds of commotion distinctly heard from that direction. So she hastened along the path to do a little investigating on her own account, and Trip was made to stand upon his hind legs and *bow* an apology, as became a gentlemanly dog of his standing, to the neighbors he had intruded upon. Bowing was one of his

special accomplishments, and you may be sure he looked very dignified and grave, as by order of his mistress, he went through that

performance in the hen house.

"There, sir, I guess you won't be so intruding and rude again," said Birdie, shaking her finger at him, as she walked away, and Trip meekly followed her with only one sheepish glance sideways at the rooster who laughed a loud "cock-a-doodle-do!" at him as he departed.

The pretty June roses and other June blossoms were fresh and wet with dew, as Birdie passed down the garden, and she thought, "Now I'll gather a few of the very bestest and beautifulst for a



THE FAREWELL GIFT FOR DEAR MAMMA.

good-by present to dear, dear Mamma, and maybe she'll keep 'em

to think about me when I'm trav'ling." So the little hands were soon at work among the bushes, till at last there was as choice and sweet a breast-knot of roses and fair blossoms ready to be laid at mamma's breakfast plate, as any mamma could desire.

When the moment for "Good-by" came—oh! how soon it did come!—the precious little bunch of flowers was pinned on mamma's breast, and if they were watered with a few tears which rolled down her cheeks and fell safely into the very heart of the flowers, nobody knew it, and the little gift of love told no tales. But you may think it very strange that just because Birdie was going away to have such a lovely time, and travel all about with her dear little friends, mamma and grandma and grandpa, too, should be so sad about it. Still you must remember that grandma and grandpa were old, and Birdie was their special pet and darling, and mamma had never been parted from her one little daughter in all that little daughter's life, except for the few weeks' visit Birdie made in New York. So after all—it seemed sad to them all to let her slip beyond the reach of their loving hands even to have so good a time, when it would be all summer before she could return to them, and "many things might happen between times"—as poor old weeping grandma said dolefully. But grandpa picked up a brave heart, and cheerily said: "There—there—Mother! don't go to fretting now, and looking on the dark side of things; Birdie will keep right side up, please God, and the trip 'll do her

good. Seems to me she's looking pale lately, ain't she?" Mamma couldn't help smiling at that, and failed—as did grandma, to see any signs of pallor on the rosy plump cheek of her girlie. No, Birdie plainly was only going away to have a good time, and not one bit in quest of health, and the tears were soon dried because of sympathy in the little girl's anticipated pleasure. So the good-by kisses were given and received, the parting embraces were bestowed, and presently off whizzed the train carrying a small traveler whose head would have been far out the window if mamma had not given special cautions to the contrary, but whose white handkerchief fluttered there instead, as far as the road was straight enough to allow of its being seen by the group left behind on the platform.

"Tell yer what now, Mis 'Starr, it's goin' to be considerble of a miss to lose 'Sunbeam' fer so long, ain't it?"

This from the good-natured ticket taker at the little office of the Station, and Mrs. Starr agreed with him indeed. Well, the days went by for every body, just the same as if there had been no merry party of two grown people and four little folks en route for the mountains and "Good Times," going from home as fast as steam could take them, and as if there had been no lonely little cottage where a dear, somewhat anxious mamma, and grandpa and grandma were doing their best to console a small-sized Teddie-boy for the loss of his beloved sister.

It was only when the first letter came to mamma from Auntie Grace, inclosing a "Round Robin" from all the children, and a pretty picture from Birdie for Teddie, that the anxious faces cleared and the little boy was consoled.

The letters were lovely and happy, and told the dear ones at home in the cottage, that the travelers were safely and pleasantly located high on one of the S—k mountains in a rambling old farm house where there were "lots of cats and dogs, and hens and chickens, and cows, and things." (Birdie's part of the description.) And where the old farmer and his wife were "kind and jolly and let you tease 'em." (Bob's part of the description.) And where "it was lovely to play in the barn and hide in the hay lofts, and chase the chickens, and help Bob boss the dogs." (Madge's part of the description.) And where "every thing was so lovely you felt like being good all the time, and glad God let you live." (Margie's part.) And where "nature seemed never so perfect and gentle, and the skies so near the ever up-reaching mountains," (found in part of Auntie's letter.)

Teddie's picture gave him wondrous satisfaction. In the figures it contained, the little boy fancied he beheld "Birdie and Teddie, Mamma!" and lovingly pitied the small couple who were out in the cold snow singing.

It was thought worthy to be framed and hung in the sitting-room, and as there were two stories connected with it, one in rhyme, as told by mamma, the other in prose as told and invented

by Teddie. I will give you picture and stories here. First, Teddie's.

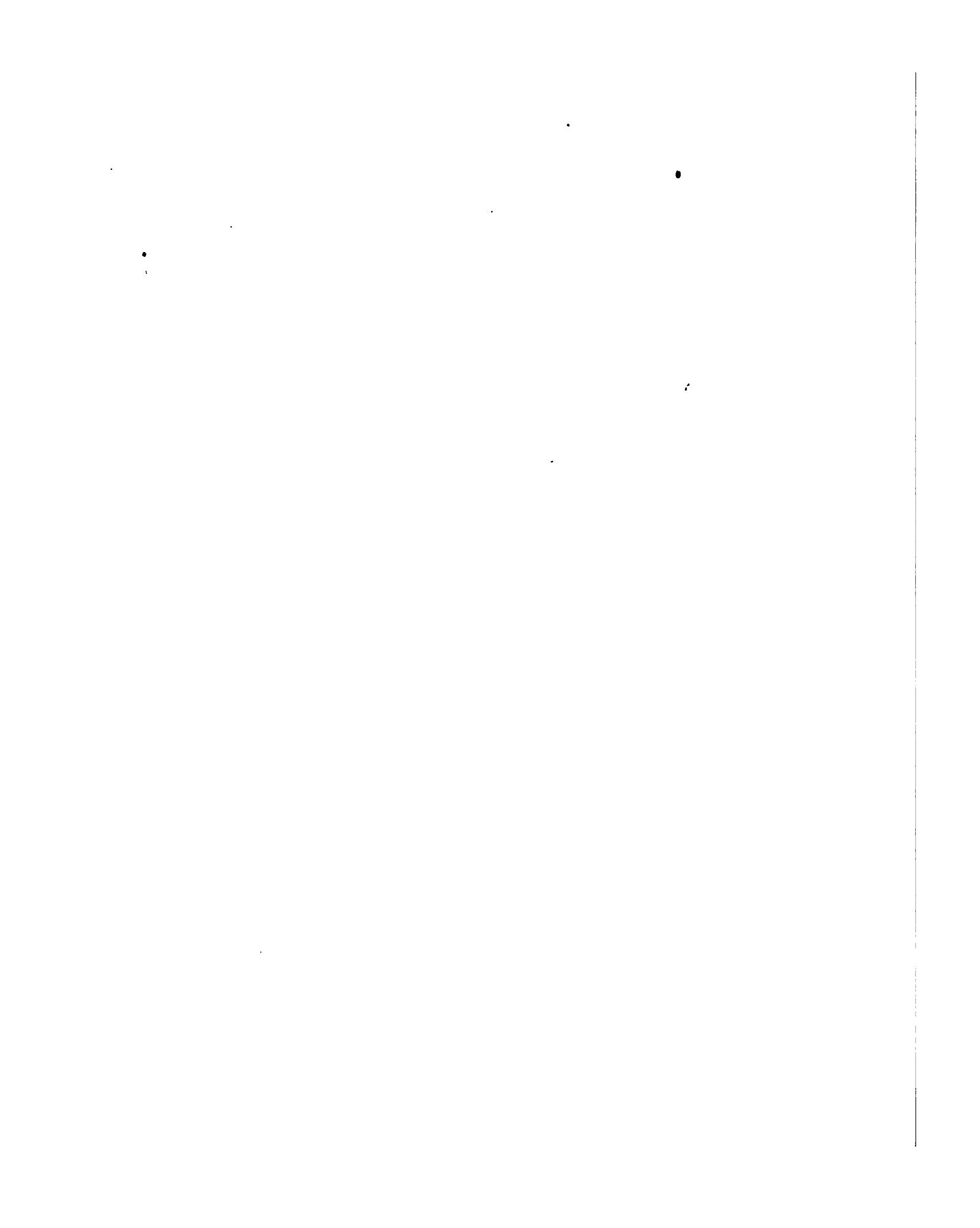
"Once there were two 'ittle chillens, one was Birdie, an' one was Teddie. They were so very cole, an' it snowed, an' whited all the groun'. An' the chillen's mamma made 'em do out an' sin' a son' to the moonshine, an' the moonshine didn't lite to see chillens out in the cole, an' so it hided away most in the black part of the sky, an' then the chillens got awful 'fwaid an' cwide, an' wan yite home fastest as ever was, an' there ain't any more stowy, so now." When Teddie's remarkable tale would come to an end, then mamma would have to relate hers as follows :

"AT THE PRISON DOOR."

"Once, oh, very long ago, in a city far away,
To an humble family, sorrow came one winter's day.
For the father, good and kind, by some cruel men was thrown
Into prison, where he lay sick and sorrowing all alone.
'Twas because he could not pay a small debt he owed, and so
They to whom he owed it thought he should to the prison go.
Better 'twould have been, I think, had they helped him day by day
Till at last by honest toil the poor man his debt could pay.
But to prison he was sent, while his wife and children two,
Day and night more lonely felt, day and night more troubled grew,
Till at last the Christmas eve came to all the waiting land,
And the prisoner's children then started quickly, hand in hand
'Neath the sky with moonshine bright,
Moonbeams making pathway light.



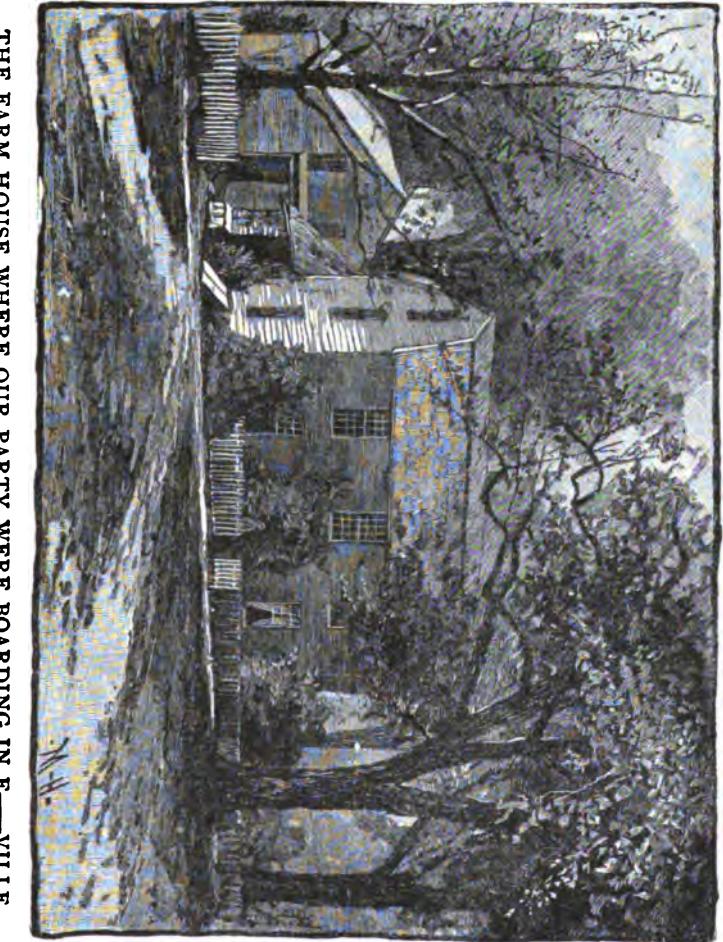
"OH FATHER LOVED! LOOK AND SEE YOUR CHILDREN DEAR!"



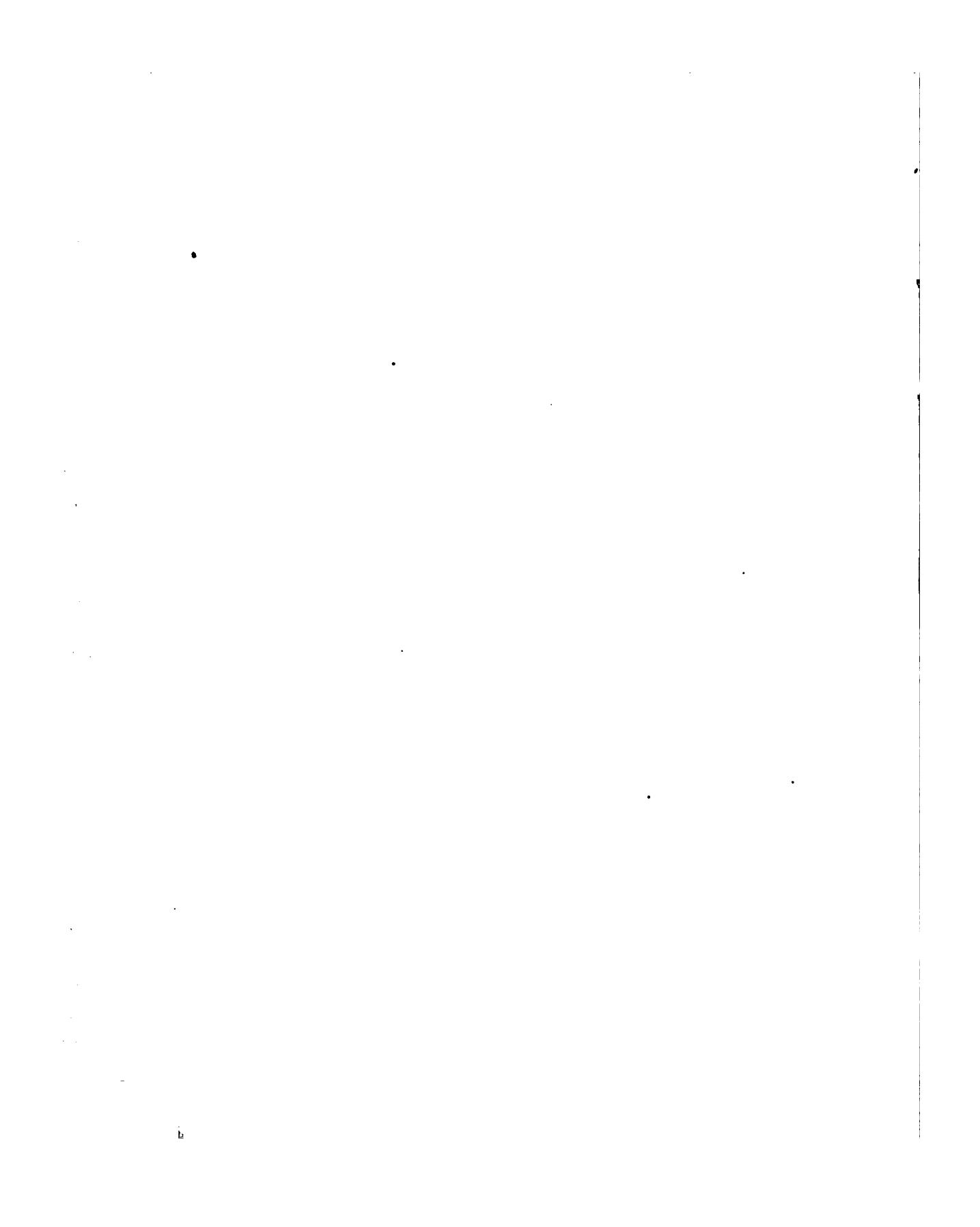
Little hearts so full and sad,
Yet to make dear father glad—
Hastening o'er the snowy ground to the dreary prison door,
Hoping they might have a chance father's face to see once more.
In the little hands were held sprays of holly-berry red,
(‘Christmas gifts to dear papa !’ so the little daughter said.)
Oh, the night was bitter cold ! sharp and fierce the winds that blew !
But they could not stop the way from those eager hearts so true.
And outside the prison door, sang they there with voices sweet
Their own song to dear papa, while his thoughts went out to meet
Those he loved, ah ! loved so well, that with thinking came the tears,
And for them his heart was filled with a throng of anxious fears.
Suddenly through prison walls, crept the music made for him
By his children's voices clear. Now with *joy* his eyes grew dim,
Sprang he to the window bars, and he strained his ears to hear,
The fond words: ‘Oh, father loved ! look and see your children dear !
We are waiting here to-night, just to see your face once more—
Father, will not Jesus soon open wide your prison door ?
Home is lonely, home is cold, home and dear mamma are sad !
We have asked the dear good Lord every night to make us glad.
But He doesn't seem to hear, till we feel afraid those men
Never will be kind, papa, and let us see your face again.
But we've brought you holly red—‘tis the Christmas eve, you know,
Drop a string and draw it up ; hurry father, ere we go !’
Then the prisoner's voice was heard. ‘Darlings, I am listening here,
And my heart is lighter grown for your voices sweet and clear,
Pray to Jesus, He *will* help you—I from bondage shall be free
In His own best time, and meanwhile, your sweet love will comfort me.

ed a fear in that direction. "'Cause I just asked God before we came, to let us be all safe and well, and not to let any thing turn out bad for our good times. So now, I should think you would be more trusting, Madge Moore, and take good things for granted."

Madge felt much relieved after Margie had spoken, and whispered to Birdie that it was lovely to have a sister that was "most an angel she was so thoughtful 'bout praying, you know." Bob and Birdie agreed with her, and Bobby said "he guessed she and Birdie—that is Margie and Birdie—took after angels a good deal, 'cause they had hair and eyes like sky and sunshine." Madge had declined to play a game of "Word Contest" with the other children because she considered it "a foolish game just made to show folks they didn't know as much as they thought they did," and now she rocked to and fro in the old stuffed chair which had belonged to the farm house's "best room" for years, but was, as a great favor, allowed to be in "Mis' Benton's room, 'cause she was so perlite in her ways." "Auntie," asked Madge, presently, "what 'll we do to-morrow do you s'pose? Can't we go to the hayfields and down by the brook, and oh, *can't* we go to the hanging rock the farmer told us about?" Auntie smiled. "We'll do one thing at a time, maybe, dear, but I think *you* will be apt to bring on one of your headaches if you run about in the hot sun as you did this morning, hatless and almost as wild as an Indian.



THE FARM HOUSE WHERE OUR PARTY WERE BOARDING IN E—VILLE.



Did you see those photograph views down stairs last night? Mrs. Jones said they were pictures taken of this house and of some part of the scenery around here last summer. I have bought one of the house, and to-morrow we'll send it to Birdie's mamma. She would like to see the place, and you can tell her, or Birdie can, when she writes, just where you children are located in regard to your room."

That idea was instantly acted upon by Birdie, who left her game (the more willingly as she bade fair to be beaten by Bob, who was positive that o-t-e-s was the way to spell "oats," and so made himself nearer the triumphant number of ten)—as soon as Madge told her about the photograph. She could not wait for to-morrow, but must sit down at once to write mamma and send the picture. And my little readers may see it too, and know as well as Mrs. Starr that the three little girlies shared the room one window of which is seen at the right hand of the house up stairs, while Auntie's room contained the two large windows in the middle and at the left hand corner. You may be sure it was a great comfort to Mrs. Starr to know just how her little Birdie's nest was formed and where, and how it looked among the grand old trees.

Pretty soon the barking of Shep, the farm dog, was heard, and the children ran to the gate to see the cows come home, while Shep had much ado to keep them from straying on further up the road, tempted by the beautiful sunset and the fresh green grass to delay their milking hour.

"That reminds me of a little song I used to like about the cows and the milking hour," said Uncle George who joined the group at the gate, and laughed to see Bobby, the brave laddie of the party forgot his bravery, (boasted,) and *jump*, because one cow



mildly rubbed her nose against his hand as she passed close by.

"Let's hear the song, Uncle George!" cried the girls, and while Bob slyly tossed a revengeful stone at the cow's horns, they gathered about the gentleman and listened in admiration as he sang.

"THE MILKING HOUR."

" Now the rustling, fresh'ning breeze,
O'er the field is blowing,
And above the western hills,
Sunset skies are glowing.
Down the lane with laggard feet
Come the farmer's cows,
Stopping here, and straying there
'Midst verdure sweet to browse.

" Pretty Betty trips behind
Her gingham bonnet swinging.
The while her happy heart betrays
Itself in merry singing.
' So-boss ! come round ! get on, old White !
This way, my Brindle beauty !'
And thus between the lines of song,
Ring out the cries of duty.

" Now the breeze still fresher grows,
Fades out the sunset glory,
And o'er the milking pail, the lass
. Harks to the sweet old story.
As told by Tom, the neighbor's son,
Whose steps that way in straying,
Find at that milking hour, be sure,
Good cause for their delaying."

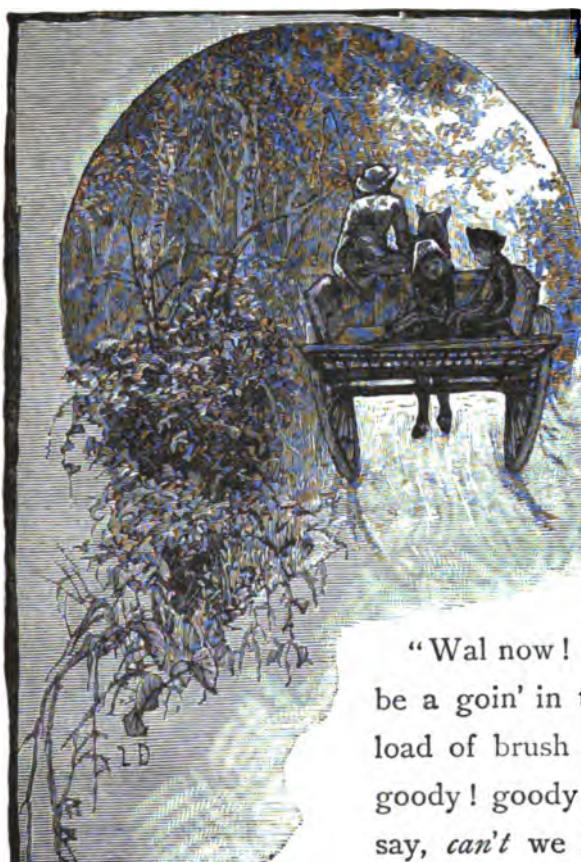
How much longer this song would have proven to be there is no telling, for Bobby, listening in vain for "some funny part" without which, in his opinion, no song could ever be complete, suddenly interrupted with—" Oh, pshaw ! what a song ! it's nothing but an old love song ! I hate 'em, don't you, Bird ? I thought you were going to sing about the cows kicking her or something, or running away, or doing no end of things to bother her. I wouldn't trouble about singing any more if I were you, Uncle George !"

" Very well, very well, sir," replied his Uncle, " if you are **so** unappreciative of a good thing, I will take your advice. Meanwhile—" as the tea bell rang—" I move we go to supper." " And **I** move too," cried Bobby, as he jumped up and made for the dining-room post haste. The others followed him, and presently full justice was being done to the plain but really good supper set before them



CHAPTER XI.

A PLEASANT DAY.



THE next morning Farmer Jones said at the breakfast table that he hoped to have a fair day, as he had some work to do in the fields some distance away.

"Oh, Mr. Jones!" asked Bobby excitedly, "are you going in the big wagon so's we can go too?"

"Wal now! I shouldn't wonder if I be a goin' in the hay cart, cos I've a load of brush to move, an'"——"Oh, goody! goody!" interrupted Bob, "I say, *can't* we fellers go along?" The

farmer laughed. "Wal, yes, I should say you 'fellers' could, seein's there's room for ye. Be spry and get on hand in a jiffy" said the farmer, as he rose from the table to go to the barn.

So Bob and Madge—Margie and Birdie were more inclined to go to the brook with Auntie—were soon in the hay cart behind old Whitey who jogged along, indifferent alike to the occasional touch of her master's whip, and the drawled "g'long, g'long!" which now and then sounded from his lips between which always protruded a twig, or blade of grass, or piece of straw, any thing which could be chewed, in fact.

There was one time during the ride when Whitey quickened her pace, but the result was rather unexpected, for Master Bobby was jerked through the space between the rail at the rear of the cart, and the floor of the lumbering old vehicle, and slipped suddenly to the ground, yelling lustily "Hold on, I say, till a feller gets up, can't you?" while Madge laughed so she nearly fell through herself. After that the farmer refrained from his "g'longs" and the field was reached in safety.

Meanwhile Auntie and Birdie were having a lovely time in the cool green meadow under the blue sky so full of tender sunshine. O, the daisies the little girl gathered! And the long whiffs of sweet air with which she filled her lungs!

Margie and Uncle George had wandered down the ravine in search of mosses, while Auntie Grace sat on a rock beside the

brook, to rest, and Birdie brought her great bunches of sweet grasses and clovers to smell and bury her face in. "Oh Auntie, I always *do* love the country so! I just love my own country,"—meaning her home in Milford—"but this seems so wide and



so—so—kind of spready, you know: there ain't so many houses in it, and oh, it's beautiful to stand on the rocks and look down—down—down to the village below!"

Aunt Gracie smiled, and wondered if ever there could be found a sweeter, more appreciative little recipient of God's dear bless-

ings upon earth, than the child who *loved* every thing He had made, so dearly.

Uncle George and Margie had during this descended the rocky path which led to the ravine, and soon found what was known as the "Hanging Rock." I think certain of my young readers will remember that ravine and the high rock upon which one summer not long ago they liked to stand, or under which they crept along the narrow ledges of stone below. It is a pity that these four little friends had not chanced to go to E—ville during that same summer, for I am sure Bobby would have proven a great acquisition to the party on all their rambles. Well, Margie was a little afraid at first, but finally Uncle George persuaded her to stand beside him upon the ledge of rocks, and look far down at the rocks and ferns below. Then they crept cautiously down the steep foot-path which led directly under the "Hanging Rock," and walked along till they came to a little cave through which Uncle George coaxed the timid Margie to crawl after him until finally in great triumph they emerged high up, and out into sunshine again.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Margie, looking at her scratched little hands, and disordered condition of dress. "Wasn't it fun, though Uncle George? *I* don't care for my dress or my hands, and I don't b'lieve Auntie 'll mind either. But I do wonder if people come here often!"

"Why, Margie, look down there!" said Uncle George, "there's somebody now directly under the hanging rock, see him?"

Margie looked disappointed. "Oh bother! I didn't want any body to know about this place but our own selves, so's we children could have lots of fun here."

Uncle George laughed. "H'm: I guess there are people who have lived here in this region longer than we have, puss, and the hanging rock's no secret, see! that man has his gun, and I rather think, after he has finished that meditative smoke of his, there will be some wholesale scare among the birds or the squirrels. Come on, dearie, let's see what else we can find to tell Auntie and Birdie about."

So on they went, climbing, scrambling, slipping,—(once Margie lost her foothold, and rolled down a soft grassy bank right into a clump of ferns, where she lay laughing, and rosy, and sweet as a flower-bud in the bed of green, until her uncle hurried to her rescue,)—and clinging to branches of shrubbery and saplings until at last they stood upon level ground and went home through the woods to the meadow where Auntie Grace and Birdie awaited them. The children then ran about the fields, gathering handfuls of daisies and yellow buttercups with which they were to fill glasses in their rooms, while Uncle George and Auntie Grace sat side by side for a quiet talk, and help each other wonder why this summer was to *them* the sweetest, happiest ever known. In the meantime

Madge and Bobby had enjoyed their trip to the fields with farmer Jones, and had moreover made the acquaintance of a

boy a little older than Bob, who with his family was boarding at the hotel in the village, and had come up to the mountain with some friends for a day's excursion. The boy was pretty airy, and seeing Bobby in his rough and tumble suit, helping the farmer with the brush, concluded he was the



farmer's son and called in a lordly way, "Hi, youngster! just tell us where to find a spring, will you, that's a good boy!" Bobby turned a hot face to the speaker, straightened

up his manly little figure, and replied, "'Hi, youngster, yourself, who you ordering, I'd like to know? *I'm* Robert Reynolds from New York city, an' I ain't in the spring-finding business, am I, Madge?" Madge thus appealed to, took up the discussion very willingly, and contributed the following speech: "You've got curly hair, and a velvet cap, and think you're fine, but Bob's got just the same things, and *he* don't put on airs and boss folks, only—only—sometimes," remembering suddenly that she had been frequently "bossed" by the young gentleman in question. The stranger blushed a little, then laughed and apologized, and Bob, not to be outdone in *any* thing, at once made apology for his rude reply to the lad's first remark, and Madge following suit, the three were presently on good terms, and went spring-hunting together. Then they parted, the older boy to join his friends at a little distance, and Bobby and Madge to cuddle down among the brush which the farmer was now ready to cart home. And so the morning was over, and the afternoon brought its own portion of pleasure to each of the party, whether they sought it out beneath the golden sky, or in the cool quiet of their rooms.



CHAPTER XII.

BOBBY AND THE TURKEY.

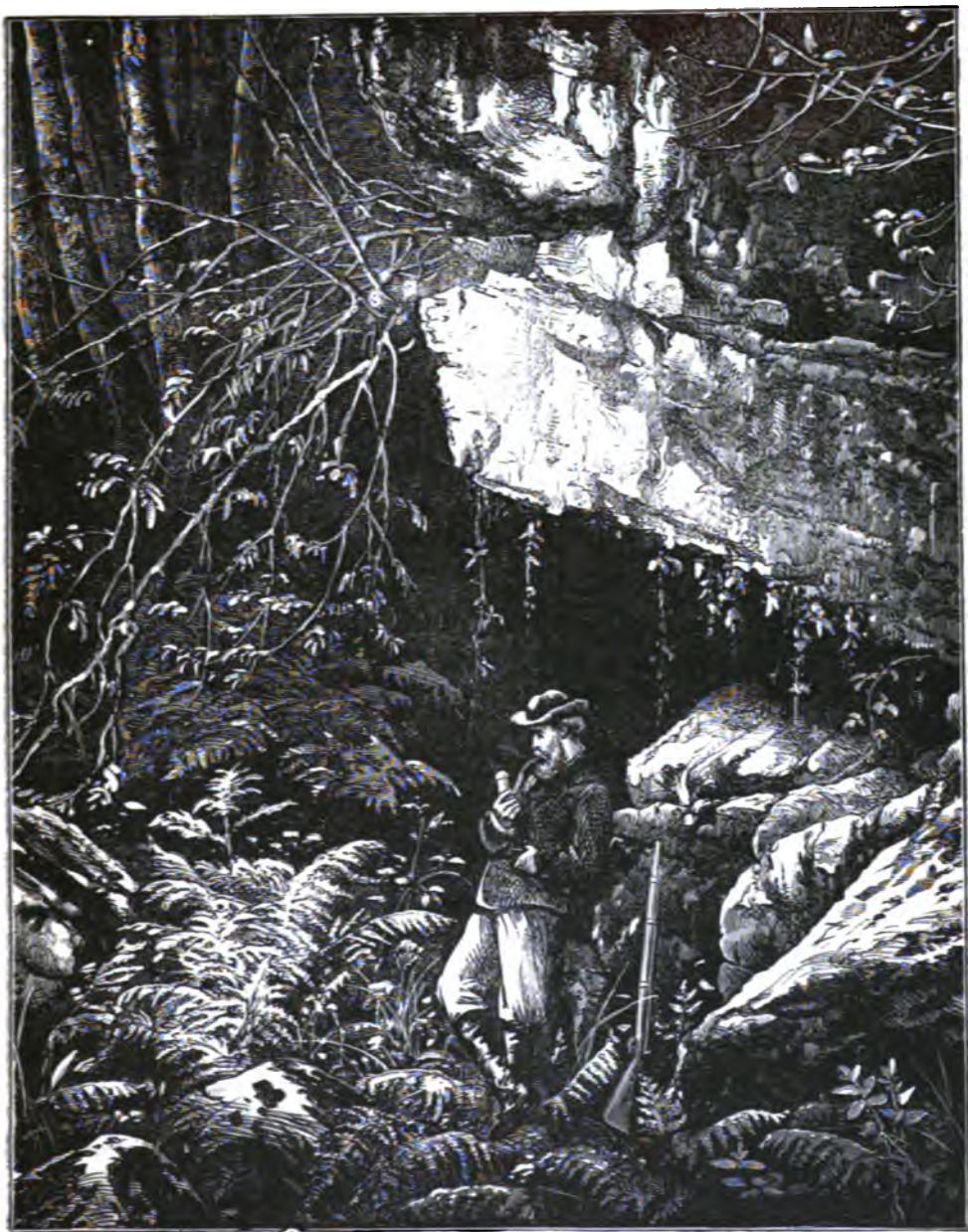


ONE day Bobby, who had been having a secret with his uncle for some days, came in great glee, and with many airs of importance and exceeding wisdom to the little girls, and suggested that he should teach them a German song. They laughed heartily at the very idea. "Ha, ha!" exclaimed Madge pointing a mocking finger at him. "Can't spell o-a-t-s and yet wants to be a German professor ; ha, ha!"

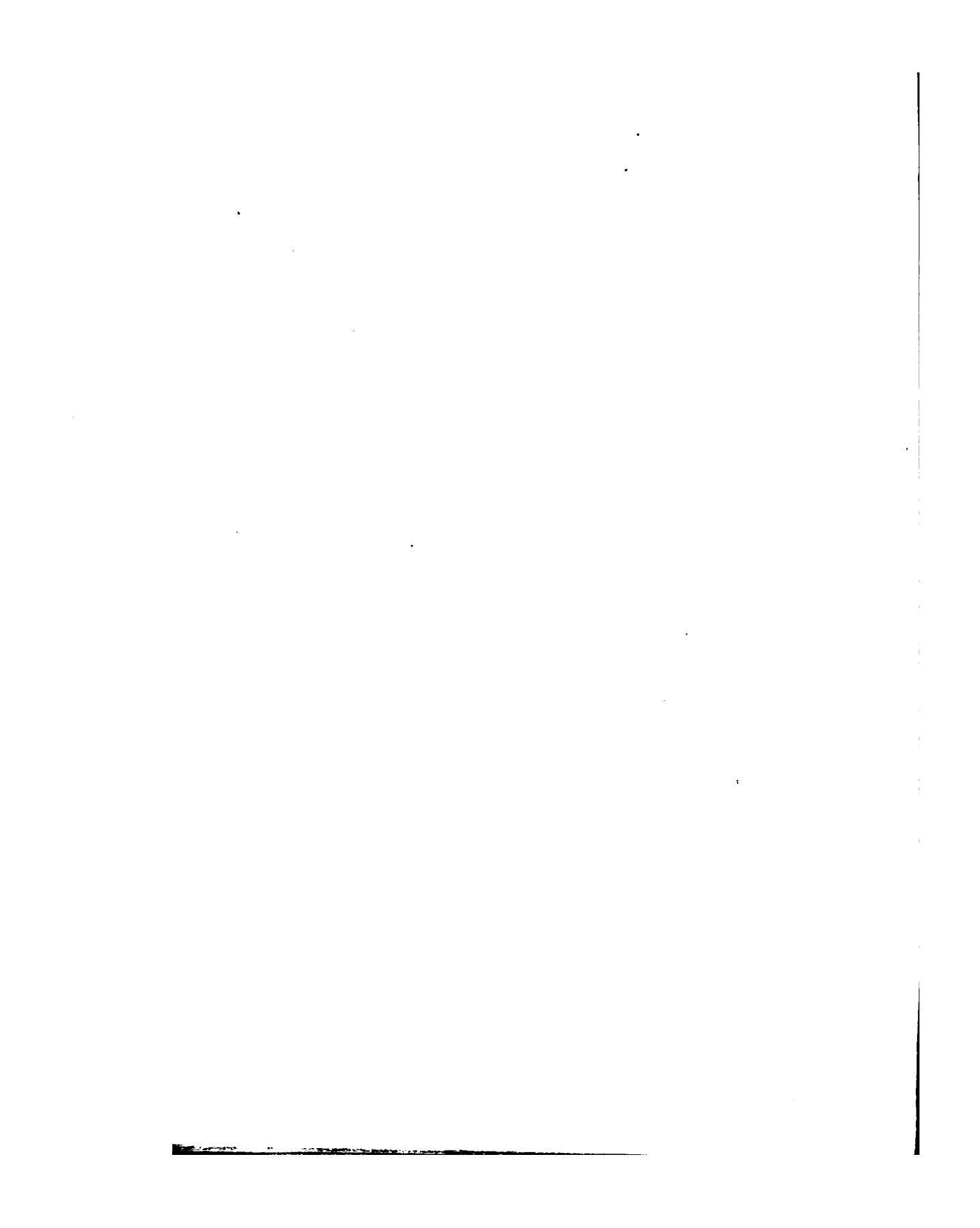
"Yes," chimed in Margie, "short pants, and wants to be a professor !"

Even Birdie, quiet little Birdie, couldn't refrain from—"What'll you charge, Professor Reynolds, to teach us the language as good as—as—you know it your ownself?"

"All right!" exclaimed Bobby, somewhat crestfallen in spirits. "All right, Miss Knownothings! just you *see* if I don't know Ger-



IN THE RAVINE



man, so now." Then he began—as glibly as a parrot, I will confess—

" Ich liebe dich, ich liebe dich,
Wie Blumen—die Sonnenschein,
Im Sommer, Winter, Frühling—ing—Frühling—ing—

"Oh well, you see, you bother a feller when you act so silly. I can't trouble to tell you the rest just now, but I don't mind teaching you what I've said."

"Pooh! you've gone and forgotten it, and that's all there is about it," said Madge.

"I'll bet a bright dollar you've been getting Uncle George to show you how to say that, and you don't even know what it means, does he, Bird Starr?"

"He says it pretty nicely, what he does remember, any how," replied Birdie sweetly refraining this time to quiz poor Bob, and feeling that after all, "he was pretty smart."

"Pshaw! *I* know some Dutch, too," cried Madge—"listen! 'Nix cum arous—in a Dutchman house,' so there now!"

"And—and *I* know 'dunder an' blitzen,' 'cause the ice man at home says it," added Margie.

"Well, I never saw such a set of girls!" exclaimed Bob in disgust. "Come on! let's go to the barn-yard and have some fun. There's a jolly old duffer of a turkey cock there, and I tell you, he's the scariest thing when he sees *me*! some folks, now you girls frin-

stance, would like as not cut an' run when that turkey came near you, but you oughter seen me the other day when I looked him in the eye! He just gobbled, as if he said 'oh my!' and walked away. 'Come on, fellers, won't you?'

"If you don't stop calling us 'fellers,' Bob Reynolds, we won't speak to you for a week, will we, children?" cried Birdie, indignantly. "Isn't he awful 'bout that?" was Margie's reply in question form. Madge, who didn't mind being called "fellers," but who on the contrary I think rather admired that mode of address, said nothing against it, and was rewarded by a pleased look from Bobby as they filed out of the room *en route* for the barnyard.

On the way they saw Auntie and Uncle George talking together and Madge noticed that Auntie ceased talking as they drew near, while Uncle George immediately began to speak of what "a lovely afternoon it was."

"There, now," exclaimed the little girl, her dark eyes growing wide with indignation. "You're just as horrid as papa, you old Uncle George! having secrets with Auntie just the same's *he* did and does forever!"

"Why, Madge Moore! ain't you awful!" cried Margie aghast at her sister's speech. "The idea of calling papa—your own very preciouseth papa—horrid! *I'm* just disgusted with such a thing!" Auntie looked grave, and Uncle George I'm sorry to say only

laughed, instead of following Auntie's example and reproving the little girl.

Madge saw the look in Auntie's eyes, and instantly her better nature asserted itself. She threw her arms about the dear Auntie's neck, and said: "Oh, do *please* forgive me, Aunt Gracie, but you see, secrets always make me so mad ; and you were having one, 'cause I caught you. But I'm sorry I spoke so, and—and Uncle George, I meant that you were just as *lovely* as papa, only—only I do wish you wouldn't encourage Auntie to have secrets."

"My dear little girl," said Uncle George—"to be like papa—however you may judge him, is in my opinion a great compliment, so I forgive you freely for your naughty intention, you know." But Auntie, though she returned Madge's kiss, thought it best to impress upon the heart of her little impulsive niece certain lessons she had tried so long to teach her by way of keeping that hasty tongue in order, so she said gently but firmly :

"I think you had better go up to my room, Madgie, and I will join you presently." The children looked at her in dismay, and Bobby asked: "Can't she just as well wait till we come back from the barn-yard, Auntie ? we're going to have such fun !"

"Madge, I think, understands my request," was the reply and the little girl turned slowly, winking back two large tears which were ready to roll down the plump cheeks, and feeling that the mild punishment was deserved.

The other children went on, though the sunshine seemed to have grown a little dim all of a sudden, and Birdie would gladly have gone back to comfort Madge had she been allowed to do so.



"*CH, MY!*" WITH A VENGEANCE.

The barn-yard was just at the rear of the large, roomy old barn which was placed high up the hillside.

There were a large number of hens and chickens there, and some turkeys, among which was a large "gobbler" of fierce dis-

position and pugilistic propensities. To him Bobby at once addressed himself, and the result was a warning gobble from the huge fowl he was teasing. Margie and Birdie begged him to stop, and were calling him "a bad, cruel boy," when Mr. Turkey made a rush at his foe, and with swelling feathers, and angry, red "bib," as the children called the piece of flesh which hangs below a turkey's bill, he knocked the little boy flat upon the ground, and flew at him again and again while Bob screamed loudly for help. He had knocked over a pail of water placed near for the convenience of the poultry, and the water ran under his back to add to his discomfort. Margie and Birdie, as frightened as he was, ran to the barn for help, but Bob was presently after them, looking miserably dejected, and begging them not to tell Madge that the turkey had gotten the better of him after his boasting so confidently a few moments before.

He had to return to the house, however, to change his jacket, and Madge standing disconsolately at the window, saw him come in, and soon discovered the reason. So that secret was out, and Bob was quizzed for a long time after, whenever he indulged in vain boasting.

Auntie Grace's secret with Uncle George also came out in good time, and what do you think it was?

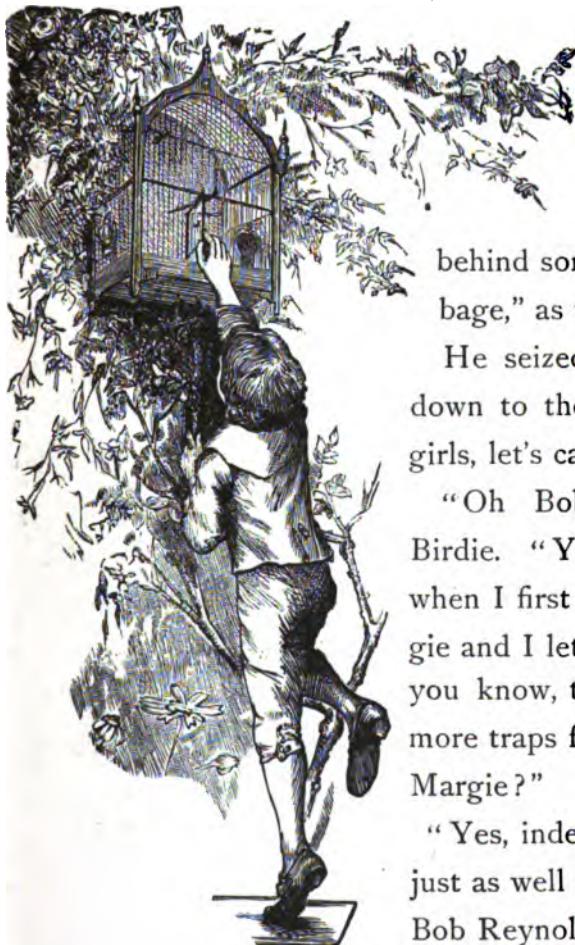
Why, they were to take a basket of luncheon and drive down to the village the next morning to the canal, and there they were to

step on board of one of the cleanest boats which could be found, and have a canal boat ride as far up the stream as time would allow, returning by moonlight, of course, and having a grand good time. Oh, you can just imagine how those four little friends greeted that news! and you may be sure the programme was carried out to the full, and indeed it was a little *fuller* than had been planned, for Master Bobby being seized with a desire to investigate the workings of a canal boat which slowly passed close to the one they were on, hesitated not to climb up the side, during a moment's stop, and before he was missed, and before he realized that the two boats were moving again, he was widely separated from his beloved party. To say that he was dismayed would not half express his feelings, nor the feelings of the little girls who looked up from the books they were reading, to see the boy frantically moving his hands, and begging the men on his boat to stop. Uncle George, however, appeared upon the scene, and at his desire, the little boy was put on shore and ran as fast as he could along the bank to where the other boat had drawn alongside for him. Uncle George rewarded the men of both boats for their trouble, and Bobby promised to refrain from being so troublesome during the rest of the trip.

They all returned that night very tired and fearfully hungry, and Mrs. Jones had the satisfaction of seeing them eat with great relish the nice supper she had prepared for them.

CHAPTER XIII.

BOB BECOMES "PROFESSOR OF GERMAN."



ONE morning Bobby, who never tired of exploring the old farmhouse garret, discovered a rusty bird cage hidden behind some boxes with other "rubbage," as the farmer's wife called it. He seized it in triumph and ran down to the girls exclaiming: "Say, girls, let's catch some birds!"

"Oh Bobby Reynolds!" replied Birdie. "You promised me long ago, when I first knew you, that time Margie and I let the bird out of the trap, you know, that you wouldn't set any more traps for birds. Didn't he now, Margie?"

"Yes, indeed he did. I 'member it just as well as any thing in this world, Bob Reynolds!"

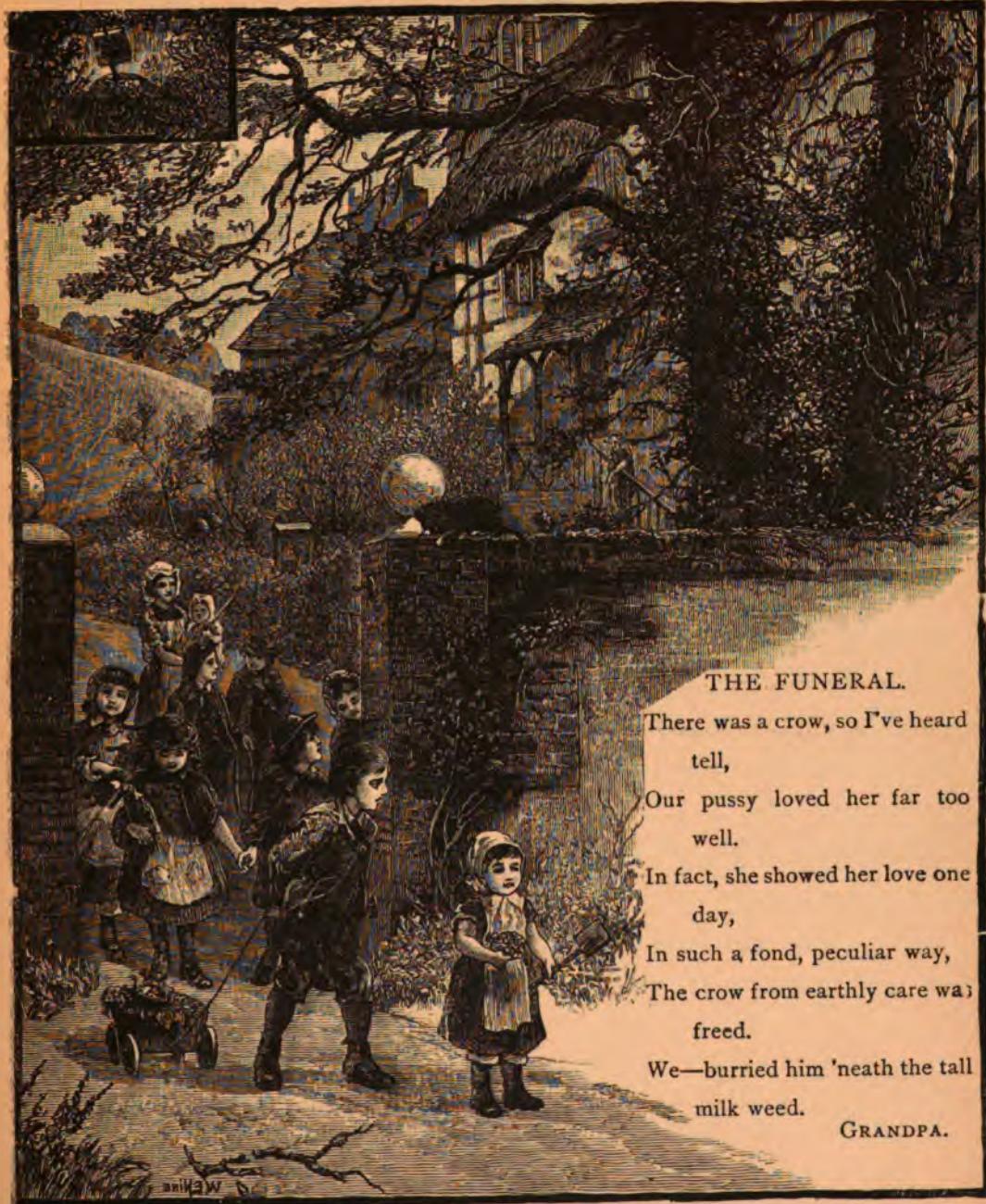
Bobby looked abashed, but his usual wits came to his aid. "Oh pshaw ! I didn't mean catch 'em to *keep* 'em, you see, I only meant to look at 'em and—and study about 'em, you know. Uncle George said we ought to learn 'bout such things as birds and other bugs and animals, you know," said he.

"*I've* got a lovely plan !" said Margie ; " let's hang the cage up on the piazza, and fasten the door open, and let's put some seed and bread in there, and some nice soft moss, and maybe some little birds that are hunting for a house will come and live in it. Won't that be fun ?"

Birdie and Bobby agreed with her, and Bobby began to hang the cage in a nice sunny nook of its own, fastening the door so that the birdies might fly in and out, as they liked.

For two or three days, the new house was critically examined by the various birds about, but I think their housekeeping arrangements must all have been completed earlier in the season, as days and weeks passed and the cage remained empty, until one morning Madge found a poor little chicken, sick and deserted by the brood and the mother who probably thought *twelve* children quite enough, so didn't disturb herself about the fate of the thirteenth. So Madge put the chicken into the cage which was set beside the kitchen stove awhile, and so the novel bird house was converted, you see, into a chicken hospital.

Two or three days after that, Birdie received from Teddy a pic-

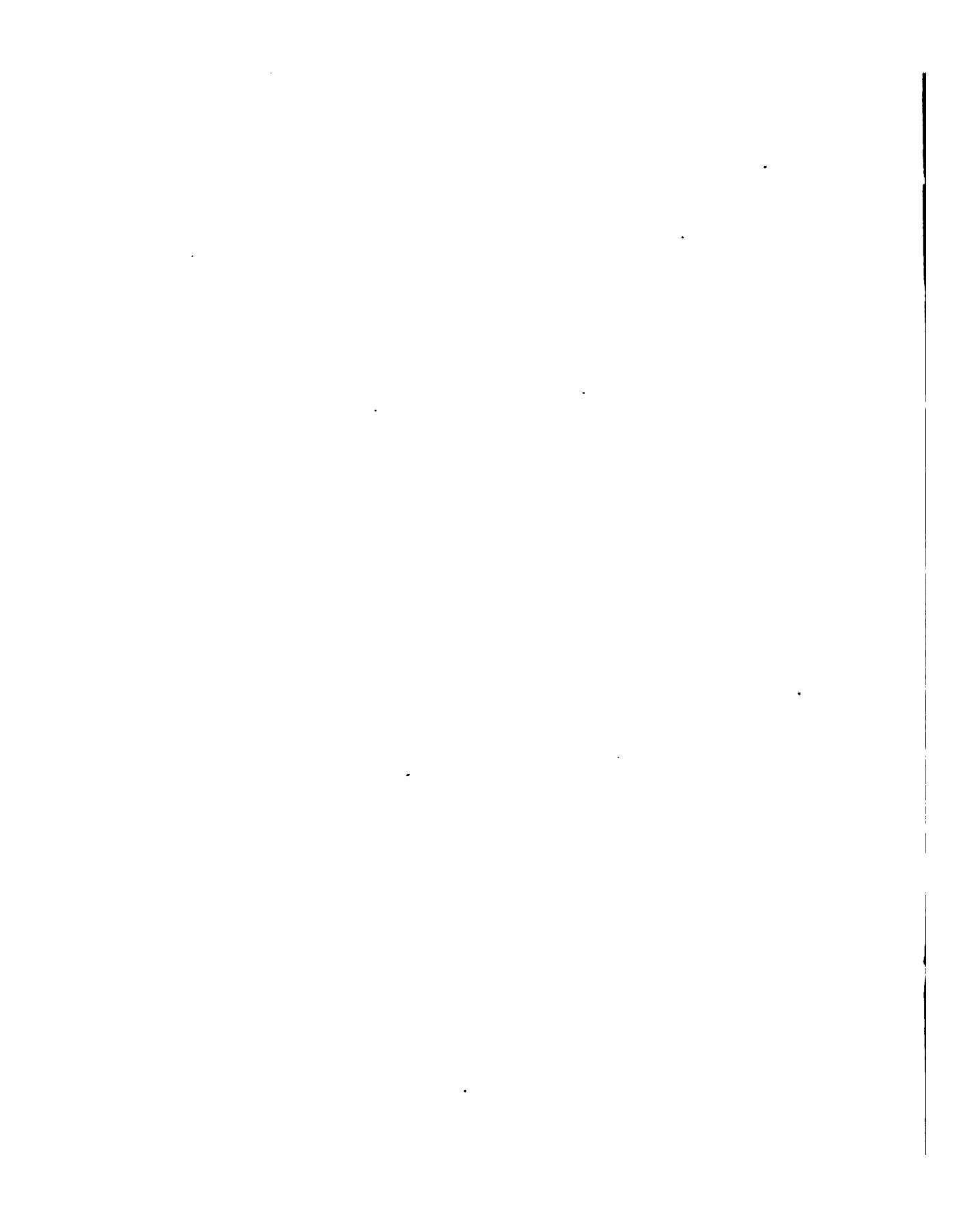


THE FUNERAL.

There was a crow, so I've heard
tell,
Our pussy loved her far too
well.
In fact, she showed her love one
day,
In such a fond, peculiar way,
The crow from earthly care was
freed.
We—buried him 'neath the tall
milk weed.

GRANDPA.

TEDDY'S PRESENT TO BIRDIE.



ture which had taken his fancy greatly in the village bookstore, and grandpa had been obliged to buy it for the dear little boy who wanted to send it to "sisser Birdie." Grandpa had written the accompanying verse which Teddie considered remarkably fine, and Birdie hung it up in her room where she could see the picture and think of Teddie every day.

"Who wants a ride," shouted Uncle George one morning just before the ringing of the dinner bell. "Whoever does, let him or her make ready to start immediately after dinner. The wagon and old Whitey wait for no man ! Hip-hip-hurrah !" "Why, George, you act as badly as Bobby himself ! What is the matter with you to-day?" laughingly questioned Auntie Grace, as she beheld her husband dancing a most extraordinary jig on the plot of grass before the house. He looked up at his pretty wife, as she called to him from the window, and replied, throwing at the same time, a kiss with his fingertips : "Nothing's the matter, Gracie, except that the sunshine has gotten into me, and as it dances so must I."

By this time a chorus of voices had responded to the gentleman's question concerning the ride, and he was presently in the midst of the young people all dancing jigs together for the edification of Auntie and Mrs. Jones who had come out to see the meaning of the noise.

"La now ! you do beat all for sperrits ! I declare, I ain't laughed so for nigh a year," said the good woman as the performance

closed and the *monkeys* ran after each other up stairs to Auntie's room.

After dinner the wagon was brought around to the door and Uncle George and the children piled in. Auntie was not going this time, having important letters to write. Madge and Uncle George sat on the front seat, while Bob seated himself complacently between Margie and Birdie on the broader seat behind. There was some discussion as to whether it was a case of "the rose between two thorns," or the "thorn between two roses," but Bob was gallant enough to say, "he would be a thorn with the *point broken off*, so's not to hurt the roses or any one else," for which speech Uncle George cried, "bravo!" and the little girls said, "they *liked* thorns when they didn't prick." Oh, the beautiful ride they took, over the roads between tall rows of trees, and wayside blossoms! Oh, the singing of the birds, the dancing of the sunshine, the low melody of summer breezes through the tree tops and the waving leaves! No wonder the children laughed and sang along the way; and no wonder Birdie whispered to Margie that "it couldn't be any more lovely to be an angel, than to live when the earth was so beautiful all the time!" Margie hugged her little friend as well as she could with Bob's form between her and Birdie, and replied, "You do have such queer ideas, Bird Starr, but I love you! I just do love you!"

"Oh!" interrupted Bob, just then. "That reminds me, you

may want to hear my German song again. I say, Uncle George, these girls are so *igerant* they don't know my German is good. Listen ! This is it. Now hear me, girls." Then he began as professor-like as possible to recite : "' Ich liebe dich ! ich liebe dich. Wie Blumen, die sonnenschein. Im Winter Sommer, Fruhling-zeit, mein Herz ist immer dein.'"

" Bravo ! bravo ! Bobby," cried Uncle George, "first rate, my boy. You'll do in the language I'm sure." Bobby looked important and well-content, and when the girls begged him to tell them what it meant, he shrugged his shoulders and replied that they must say "please," and "ask him very politely." Margie and Birdie were independent, and declared after that that they didn't believe he knew himself, he had only just learned the words from Uncle George and wanted to "show off smart." " He stuck like every thing, Uncle George, the first time he said it," cried Margie, but Madge to whom, during the talk between Bobby and the others, Uncle George had been whispering earnestly, turned her face round to the back seat, and with quite as many airs as Bob had worn, asked : " Dites moi, s'il vous plait, Bobby."

To say that the boy was astonished when he heard Madge's question, or rather her remark in a language he didn't know enough to know that it *was* a question, would not fully express his feelings.

" Well, you told us to ask you politely, and I'm sure, we've al-

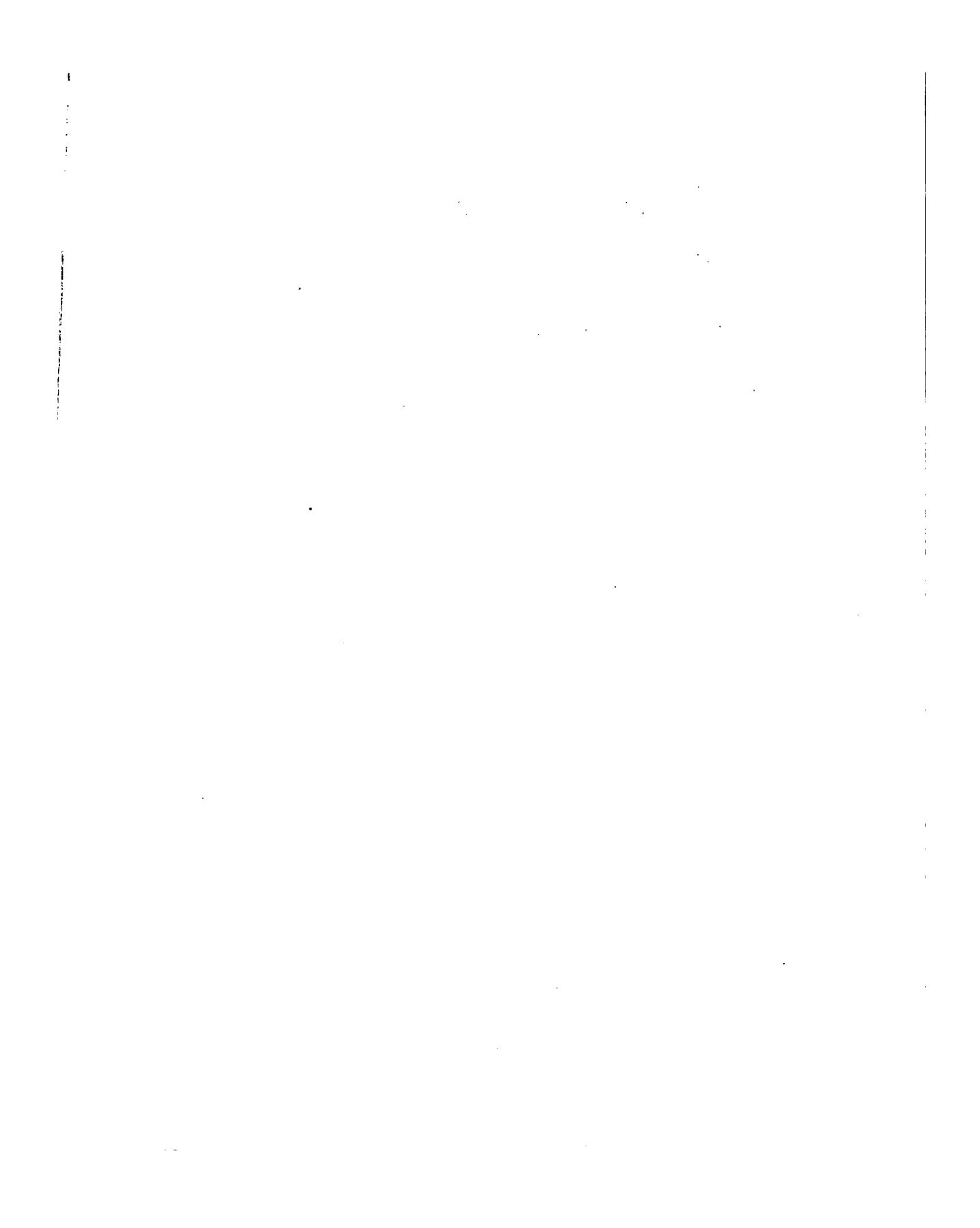
ways heard that French is the politest language in the world," she continued.

"H'm, I guess Uncle George has been teaching *you*, 'cause you don't seem to take to it naturally," he replied. "Well, will you tell us the meaning of your German?" questioned Margie, and poor Bobby, blushingly owned that he didn't know much only "it meant something about love and summer, 'cause uncle had told him." "Well, listen, children, I'll teach you all to sing it, and here's the meaning," said Uncle George who had almost laughed himself off the wagon seat. "It is only a little love song, and the composer is—is—very celebrated—you know—in fact, a *remarkably* clever person. Now then—here it is—'I love you, as flowers love the sunshine; in winter, summer and spring time my heart is thine.' Now, Madge, tell Bobby what your question was." "Well, it was only, 'tell me if you please, Bobby,'" replied Madge and she added that "she was ashamed not to know French in good earnest, but they were going to study it the next winter at school, and then she'd beat Bobby, she knew, in being so awful smart." Bob instantly resolved in his own mind that French should also "come unto him," and for the next half mile they were all busy learning from Uncle George the song he had taught Bobby.

They came in sight of a low-built house or cottage, before long, at the door of which two young Dutch girls were standing. One



"ICH LIEBE DICH!" [THE LETTER FROM HOME.]



had evidently been busy at housework, for with broom still in hand she stood reading over her sister's shoulder a letter which was a happy one, judging from the pleased faces above it.

As they drove slowly by, for Uncle George liked the pretty picture of contentment the scene afforded—Bobby whispered, "Listen to me. I'll astonish 'em, won't I though!" Then he called out—"Got a letter? what does it say? 'Ich liebe dich'?" The girls at the door looked up as he spoke, and nodded with beaming faces as they heard the few words of their Fatherland tongue.

"Oh! yah, yah!" they replied, "it ees a letter mit mooch of dat! meine mutter, she write to us from Shermány, you know, oh yah!" Then they said something else in their own language, and looked expectantly at Bobby as though for his answer, but he feeling himself caught for lack of better and more extended knowledge of their language than the song had afforded him, said hastily: "Oh do drive on—drive on, Uncle, *I* don't know what in the world they're trying to say."

Uncle George, who could speak a little of the language, paused however, and replied to the question, which was certainly a civil one, and translated meant: "Will you have a glass of fresh milk to drink?"

Then the wagon rolled away with its load, and it was Madge's turn to call Bobby a "know nothing."

CHAPTER XIV.

ABOUT BIRDIE'S HOME-NEST



a 'ittle boy dat don't take up yooms at all!" So he pouted and

TEDDIE was naughty! just as naughty as he could be. And why? Because mamma was going to the village with grandpa, and he was to stay home and "be a good little boy," mamma coaxed—with grand-ma. But Teddie thought otherwise. He could just as well go as not, of course he could, when there was "such yots of yoom in de wakin, and he only such

stood in the hall beside the stairs, which mamma would descend in a moment with her hat on, and said to himself as loudly as possible so mamma could be sure and hear—"I'll stay home wi danma—but I won't be dood 'ittle boy ! I won't—I won't—I won't ! no ! no ! no ! does oo hear me, Mamma?"

And mamma called back sadly : " I hear old cross Tommy, but I would like better to hear my little Teddie's sweet voice."

So Teddie considered a few moments, and reflected that it had always happened since he could remember, that when mamma said "no" she meant "no"—and that being bad wouldn't help him in the least, so he might as well be good.



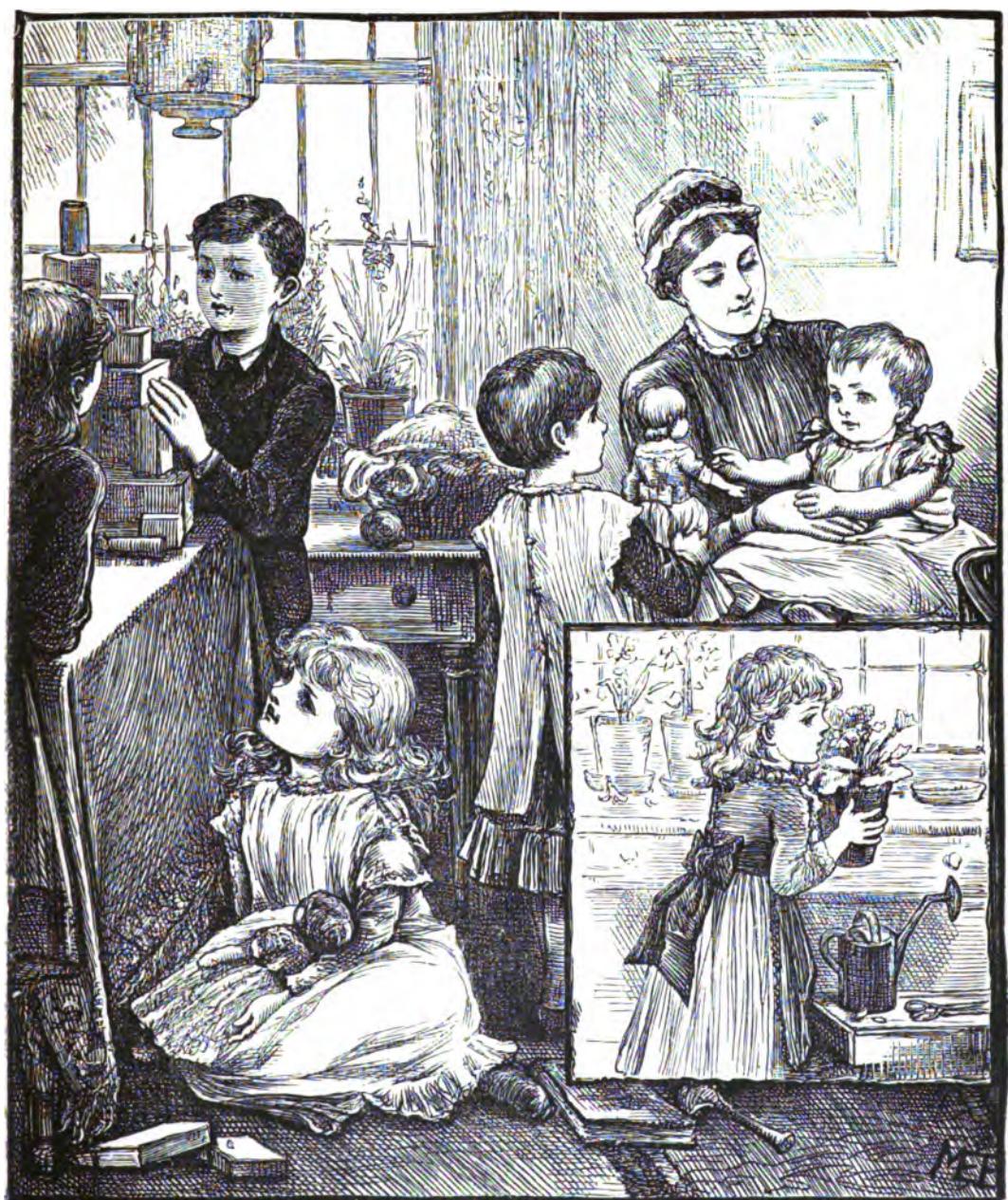
Then the little face brightened, and a sweet, unmistakable Teddie-voice cried up the stairs : "Loot over and see me smile, Mamma!" which mamma did at once, and smiled back into as bright and dear a little countenance as ever could be seen.

"Oh, you blessed, blessed lamb!" cried grandma, coming at that minute into the passage way, and delighted to see that the clouds had departed and the sunshine returned. "Danma will show him his pictures, and tell him stories, and do every thing for him when he's good, won't she? Now run out and play for just a little while, till grandma gets her bread out of the oven, and then we'll see what we'll see!"

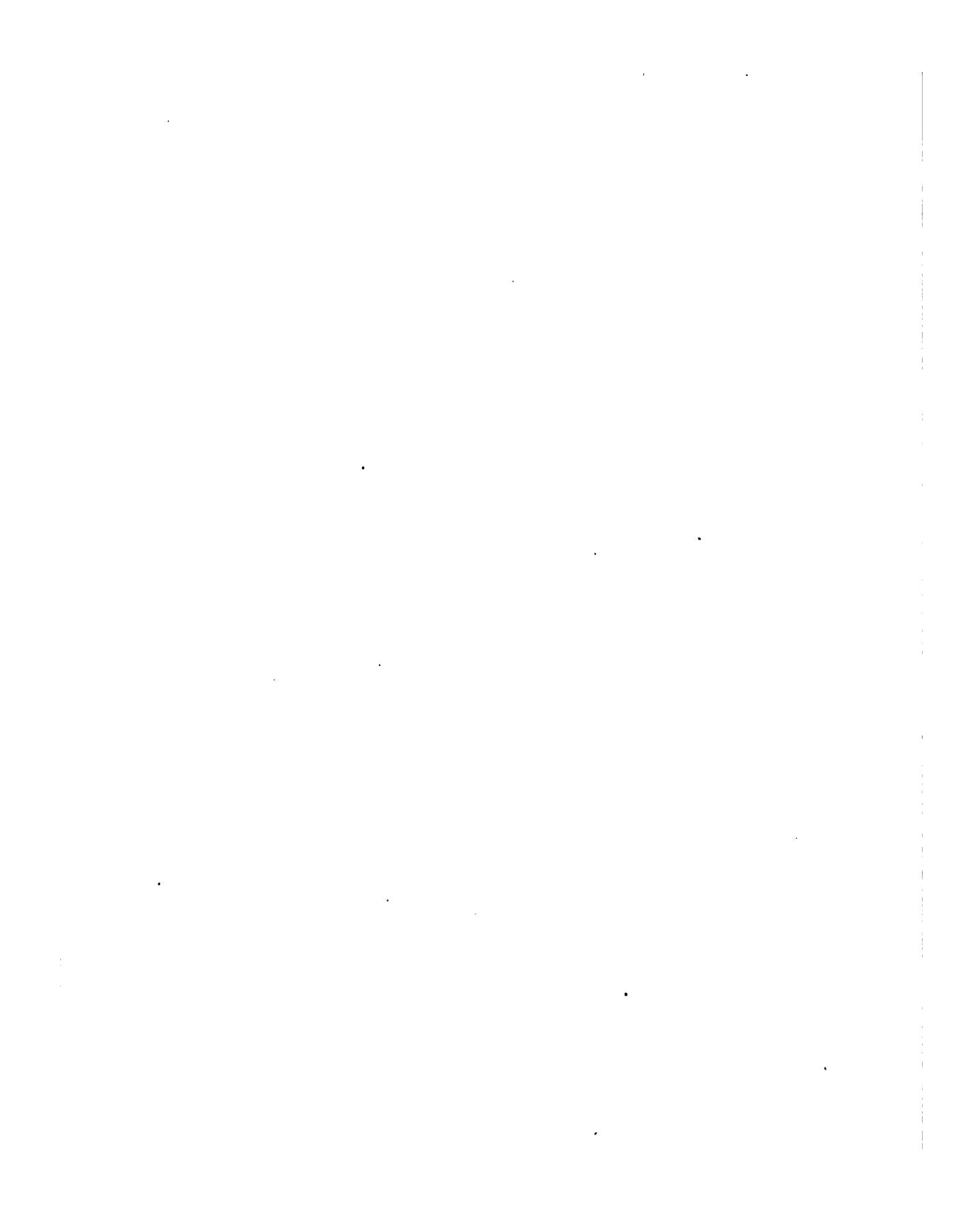
So when mamma and grandpa had kissed him and driven off—Teddie put the good natured cat into his little cart and trotted up and down the garden walk until pussy considered patience a virtue which could not last forever, and quietly hopped out of the cart unseen by Teddie, the horse, who only discovered her absence when it had occurred to him that he was dragging a lighter weight than before. By that time grandma was ready for his entertainment, and he went in to her arms and comfort.

Grandma brought forth the inevitable scrap book, and Teddie opened it at the picture of "the Happy Family" which grandma read about as follows :

"Once a happy family lived all together, as you see,
Sammy, Nellie, sister Kate, Susie, Lillie, Gracie wee,



"THE HAPPY FAMILY."



Father, Mother, at the head,
(Tho' their names the last are said,)
And oh, 'twas always pleasant weather
Where all these children lived together.

"Baby was the Queen : so sweet from little head to dainty feet.
And at her throne her sisters four with brother Sammy loved to meet.
And oh ! the nursery games they played
To please the winsome little maid !
And oh ! the little hearts so glad,
That never made each other sad !

"Can you guess what rule was there in that home of children fair,
When their pleasures and their love each would with the other share ?
Simply this, 'as kind will we
To others always try to be,
As we would wish to us were done
Whate'er our duties or our fun,'
The 'golden Rule,' my children, see ?
Was learned by all that family."

Then grandma sang Teddie a song of slumber time. It was getting late in the afternoon and the little boy was growing sleepy. She had something to do which the care of Teddie prevented, so she thought she would show him a sleepy picture of the cows going home for the night, and Teddie yawningly said—"S'umber time, danma, for dose tows, isn't it?" "Then let's sing about it,"

she said, settling the dear head on her shoulder, and quietly rocking back and forth, while the brown eyes sleepily looked at the

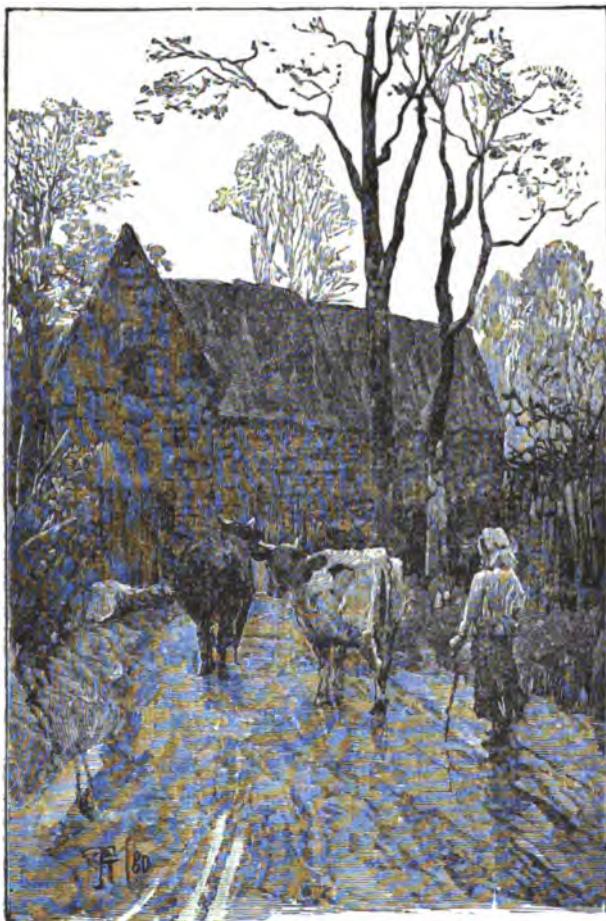
picture and the fat little forefinger traced the shape of the figures as grandma sang.

SLUMBER TIME.

“ ‘ Oh cows, you know you
are sleepy !
You’ve yawned for an
hour or more,
And chewed your cuds
with of sigh of relief
That the day was nearly
o’er.

“ ‘ Now hasten home to the
farm yard,
And give your milk so
sweet,
And then you’ll find in the
sheltered stalls,
Some nice fresh supper
to eat.’

“ So sang the little maid Gretchen,
As she rubbed her sleepy eyes



And homeward drove the lazy cows,
Under the darkening skies.

“For little maid Gretchen was sleepy,
So long had been the day,
Since she tumbled out of her little bed
With the dawn of the morning gray.

“And little maid Gretchen was tired,
She had helped her mother, so well,
And the half of the work she had done all day,
I’m sure I never could tell.

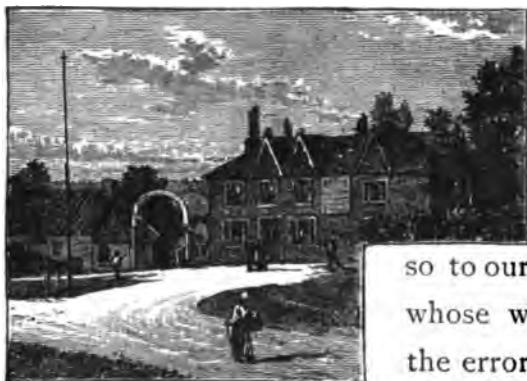
“But slumber time came for Gretchen,
And for every young sleepy-head.
And only the moon was awake to see
If the earth had gone to bed.”

By the time grandma’s song was finished, mamma and grandpa returned with letters from the absent Birdie and Auntie Grace, and Teddie, who had followed “Gretchen’s” example, and gone to sleep, was laid quietly upon his own little bed, while mamma read her letters aloud to grandma and grandpa.



CHAPTER XV.

THE LETTERS AND THE SPELLING CLASS.



AUNTIE GRACE'S letter to Mrs. Starr, though very interesting to the family at Milford, would not prove as much so to our young readers as Birdie's whose we will read here, excusing the errors of spelling, etc.

"E—VILLE, July, —

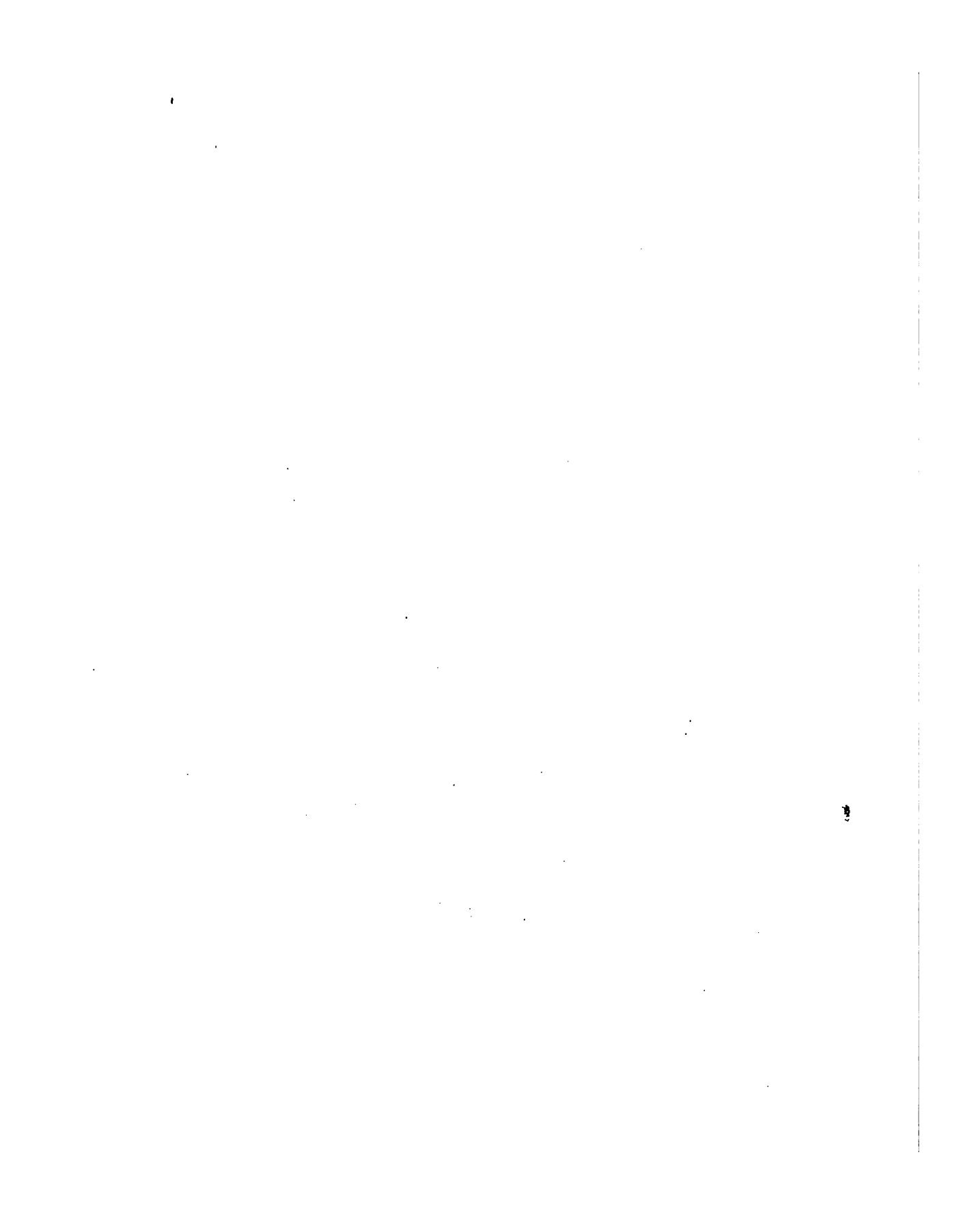
"MY OWN BEAUTIFULLEST MAMMA:

"We are having such prefeckly lovely times, you don't half know. We walk all around, and go to the rocks and things where its fun to clime. We play in the hay-field and we tumble about over each other and Bob gets lots of falls only we don't care you know cause it don't hurt us.

"One day we went out to ride and we rode thruh a place where some children were having real fun. The biggest girl had flowers



THE JULY "MAY-DAY DANCE."



on her head and in her hands, and all the other boys and girls were hoping and dancing about round em. Auntie said she gessed they were having a May day dance in July. Bobby he called out to em, hi there—kiss the Queen for me, and the queen she blushed awfully and the other boys they said hi yourself. And that Bobby Reynolds he threw em a dandyline and made em all laugh. Margie and I we looked as dignifide as we could but Madge only said go ahead Bobby, and Auntie Grace and Uncle George they finly made him stop.

“Oh you dear sweet lovely mamma, I do want to kiss you and hug you so much. I am having good times but I feel like being lonely sometimes when I want you and cant have you. I want to see how you look in your eyes now, and I want to hear how your voice sounds. We all love you but I told the children I loved you best of all and I do dont I mamma?

“Now I must say good by and we send kisses and hugs to all the family and to dear little Teddy mostest of all cept you.

“Your own

“BIRDIE.”

“Poskriff.—I send a picture to Teddie. Mrs. Jones gave it to me out of an old paper book and Auntie says I better send the poetery with it cause he likes reading so much.”

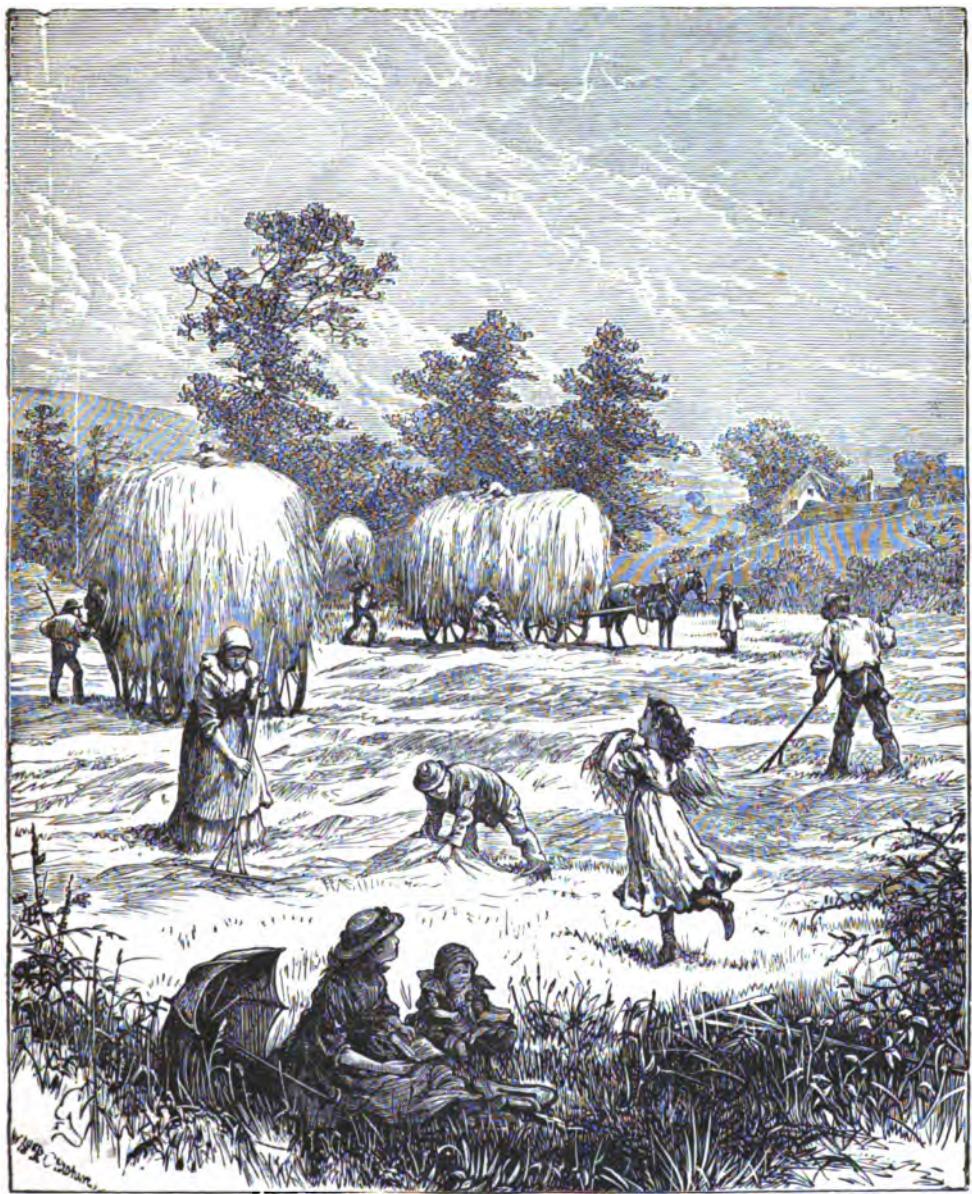
Mamma laughed over her little daughter's letter, and rubbed

her cheek over the lines the dear little hand had penned. "But," she thought, "Birdie must really be more careful about spelling, and I shall request the favor of Mrs. Benton that she insists upon my little girl devoting some part of the days to the pages of the spelling book she took with her." So when she replied to Birdie's letter she made the request also of the child herself, and little "Sunbeam" never neglected that one duty required of her, throughout the rest of her trip, though it must be confessed that, as is the case with many little people of their age, spelling was the one "bother and nuisance," (to quote from Bobby), of letter writing so far as *they* were concerned.

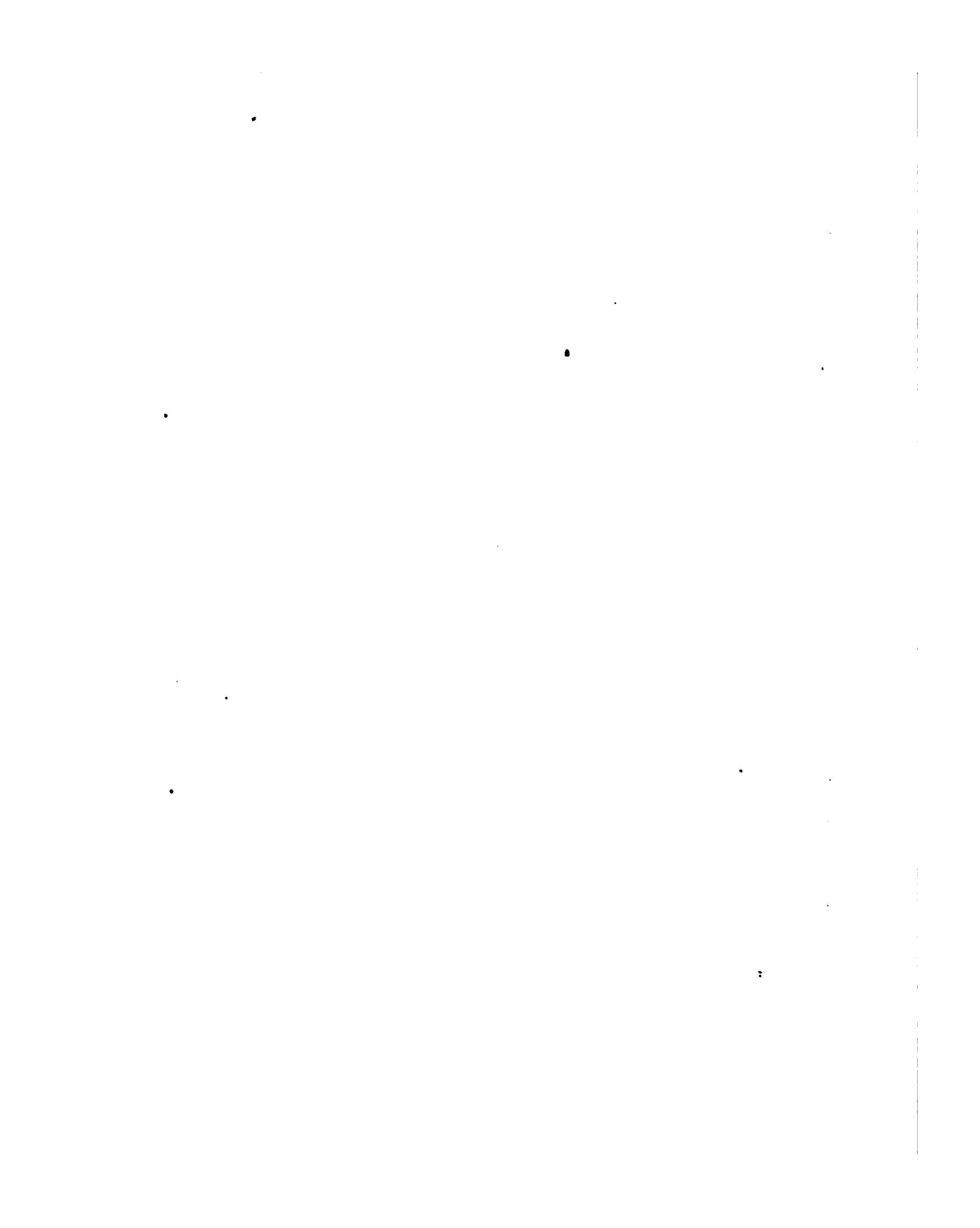
"What's the use of having to trouble about such trifles?" asked Bobby, on the morning that Auntie suggested a little spelling class under the trees. "What's the use! the folks we write to know how to spell and they might know children can't always be so particular; 'sides it'll likely bring on information of the brain if we have to study all this summer and in winter too."

Auntie laughed merrily. "Information of the brain is a good thing to have, Bobbins, and I guess you won't be apt to overtax yourself in that way."

The spelling class under the trees became a regular institution, and if not always a thing of decided pleasure to the little people, was at least a duty which Auntie felt must not be neglected, and she was heartily obliged to Mrs. Starr for having suggested it.



THE SCRAP-PICTURE FOR TEDDIE.



Teddie's store of scrap pictures was rapidly increasing, and the dear little fellow was never so happy as when he received a new one to add to the pile because—as he sweetly explained to mamma one day, after hearing her read about the sick little children in the hospitals belonging to New York city's charities,—“I doin' to fix 'em in a date bid boot, Mamma, an' when Birdie tums home, I doin' to send it yite down to New Yak, to all de poor 'ittle chillens what ain't dot any dear mamma an' siser to fine *new* pickers for em when de old ones is divèd all away.” There was no mistaking the *hint* contained in Teddie's speech—charitable though it was, and mamma was not slow in taking it.

So she agreed to furnish all the new ones she could for her small boy, after these had gone to gladden the hearts of the little sick children of the hospitals, provided Teddie would collect the new ones with the same kind motive for their future use. And to do the child justice, his little *warm* heart was overflowing with the desire to “be tind to chillens” who were sick and sorrowful and often homeless. Now for the “poetry,” as Birdie called it, which belonged to the Hayfield picture. It was grandpa who read it to the little boy one morning as an inducement to him to come in out of the hot sun and be coaxed to take his usual morning's nap. Mamma had looked out of her window and discovered her boy parading about in most remarkable dignity, a peacock feather from the long handled parlor duster

pushed through the brim of one of grandpa's old field hats, and the big farm wagon umbrella which had the better of Teddie in actual length dragging along beside the little laddie whose rosy



lips and chin were all that were visible beneath the hat. "Dear me, the child will be sick, playing out in this hot sun," thought mamma, calling him to come in. And then it was that grandpa coming from the barn, after he had indulged in a few chuckles at his

grandson's appearance—remembered the new scrap-picture and proposed to read it. That was enough for Teddie. The hat and its feather were tossed to the ground, the umbrella was allowed to

repose beside them, and Teddie springing to the strong loving arms ready to lift him, was soon on the piazza listening to :—

THE FROLIC IN THE HAY FIELD.

Oh, what fun on a summer day,
To frolic and peep amidst the hay !
Oh, what fun with the fork and rake,
Fragrant heaps of the hay to make ;
To pitch and toss
The grass across ;
To run and race
From place to place:
To pile the carts till they'll hold no more,
Then send to the barn their plenteous store.
The sun shines down from the beautiful sky,
And on the meadow the sunbeams lie.
The air is sweet with the breath of flowers,
And bright the day with its goldens hours
And merrily midst the fragrant hay,
We laugh and sing and work and play.

"So would I, Danpa, if I was in dat pickser; *we* has hay fields hasn't us, Danpa, an,"—here the rosy mouth opened wide, and a yawn interrupted the speech, and before it could be finished mamma had come to take her baby in her arms and sing the "sleepy song" which Teddie loved to hear. You can guess the result of all that, and now we must go back to our four little friends again.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LAWN PARTY AND DISAPPOINTMENT.



T happened very pleasantly that Auntie Grace and Uncle George had met old friends in the village, who had come with their families, for a few weeks of board in one of the prettiest streets the village could boast of. Frequent calls were exchanged, and the young people became quite good friends. The canal boat ride had been repeated, and better than that there had been a long delightful day at Lake Minnawaska some miles beyond E—ville. There had been moonlight drives and picnic parties here and there and oh, I can't tell you how many charming plans had been carried out. But at last the friends in the village were about to leave for other scenes, and so Uncle George had proposed to his wife that a lawn party would be a good "wind-up" for all of them.

That was such a splendid suggestion in the opinion of the children of our especial party, that it was difficult for them to remember that they were not in fairy-land, where every thing goes just as one wishes, but on this very matter-of-fact earth, beneath a

sky that is likely to cloud over and pour forth rain just when children are most anxious for sunshine. So when on the day appointed for the lawn party, our little friends awoke early to see a morning of heavy rain and dull clouds, and heard Auntie tell Uncle George to send word to the friends that the party would be postponed until the Thursday of the following week—they were a very cross set of little people indeed, and came down to breakfast with signs of disappointment plainly visible on each face.

Even Birdie looked cross until Uncle George said : “ Why—we have even lost our private, *special* sunbeam, Auntie, haven’t we ? and I had counted on that to brighten our day a little, in the house at least ! ”

Then the clouds scattered from the sweet face of little Miss “ Sunbeam,” and she had to laugh because she couldn’t help it when Uncle George drew up his eyebrows, and drew down his mouth, and looked so pitifully at her.

“ Hello ! there’s the sun again ! ” he shouted as Birdie laughed, and so presently, as laughter is contagious, the whole group was a happy one, and other plans were made for the rainy day.

And by and by when Uncle George had driven to the village to take the message to the lawn party friends, and Auntie Grace was busy with letters up stairs, Farmer Jones, who found an idle hour in consequence of the rain, offered to tell the children some stories and this was one of them : “ When I was a lad my father

and mother were very poor. We had always lived in the country. you see, but trouble came an' we had to give up our home, an' fa-ther died, an' mother she kinder concluded we'd do better in the



city, so we went there an' had a mis'rable little room where she did sewin' and I just pined an' grew thin. Wal, one day I see the boys in the street a sweepin' crossin's with their brooms, an' thinks I, 'I'll do so too an' mebbe get a penny or so for mother.' So when she

was out the next day, I picked up a broom. I was a little chap only five year old, an' the broom was a sight bigger'n me, an' out I ran to the street crossin'. Law ! how the boys did laugh at me ! They just called out : ' Hey broom, where you goin' with that boy ?' an' they scared me so I began to cry, an' nobody gave me a cent an' I went home tired of tryin' to arn any. So now when I go to your big city on business, I allus have a kind word for them little chaps a sweepin' the crossin's 'cause I've been there myself, you see, ha ! ha ! ha !" And the old farmer laughed at the remembrance of that very long ago time. "Want another ?" he asked, pleased with his interested audience. "Well, let me see. One time—we were still livin' in the city, you know, an' I was a little bigger than when I tried to sweep crossin's, it came on to be a pipin' hot summer. We boys used to get down on the docks an' swim like a fish. But one day when we couldn't go there—one of them ere street sprinklin' machines come along with the water a bustin' clean out of the barrel over the streets an' coolin' things in a jiffy. Wal, what did we do but cut behind it, roll up our trowsers,—some of us didn't have much but rags to call trowsers—an' foller up close behind the cart, an' I tell you now, that there water felt about as nice as you please on our hot and dusty feet. But finally one feller, he came behind me on a sudden, an' fust I knowed I was shoved kerchunk right into the whole rain of water, an' fell down under the cart an' of course the hull force of the water fell

on me. I was the wettest rat you ever see when the cart had passed on, an' I picked myself up. Oh, law ! we had lots of fun in them days, but mother she died soon after, an' I drifted back into the country agin', and when I growed up I kinder married an' settled down you see, and here we be, my wife an' me keepin' house as snug as a bug in a rug—”

“ And a bug in a rug
Is awfully snug,
And I'm jolly glad
I am not that bug.
I'd rather give dear
Little Birdie a hug.”

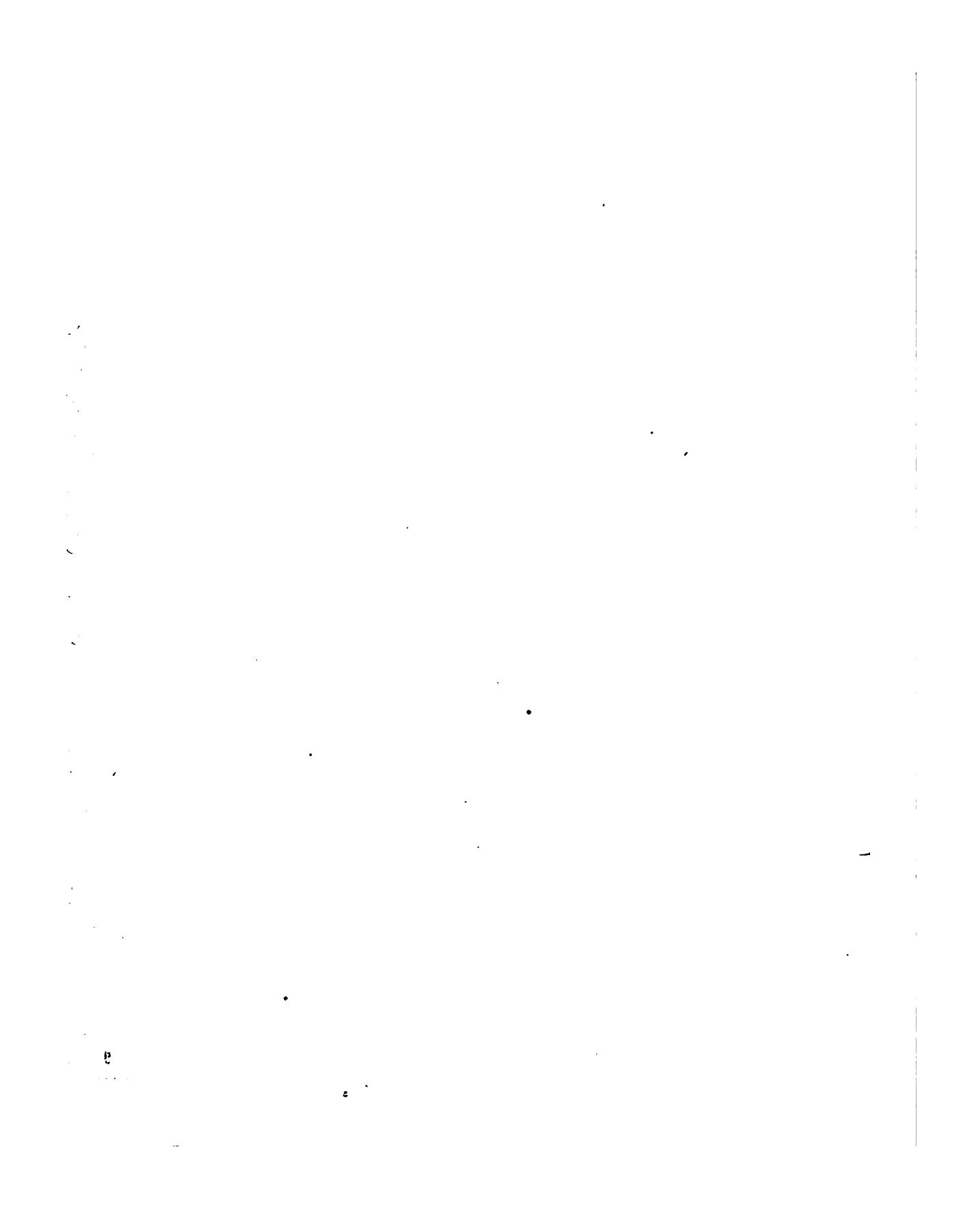
sang Bobby, interrupting the farmer, while Birdie blushed.

The farmer laughed, and rose from his seat. “ Wal, I guess I'll go an' take a look at the corner medder, children, and you can scamper up in the garret and overhaul things all you like.”

Toward night the rain ceased and the clouds rolled back, giving place to a most beautiful sunset, and Mrs. Jones's boarders gathered upon the rocks behind the house, and watched the western sky all golden and purple and royal in its court robes to bid good night to the King of Day. And they lingered still while the golden glory faded out little by little, as twilight shook out her gray, silvery veil, and wrapped the landscape gently and slowly in its folds.



MILKING TIME.



Then when Bessie, the farm girl, came out of the kitchen door, milk pails in hand, and bent her steps towards the hillside barn, Birdie sprang up to go with her, leaving Uncle George to entertain the others who had not cared to leave the quiet rocks, with a song of "The Twilight Hour," which he had sung even when only a boy, and always loved. Aunt Gracie took up the alto, and the sweet duet floated softly in the still air.

THE TWILIGHT HOUR.

The crimson glory of the setting sun
 Hath lain awhile upon the earth's soft breast,
Till twilight shadows, gathering one by one,
 Bring us the tidings, day is gone to rest.
Far out upon the waters, like a veil,
 The mists of evening rise and stretch away
Between the horizon and distant sail,
 And earth and sea are clothed in somber gray.

The tide comes higher up the rocky beach,
 Singing the song it hath for ages sung ;
Recedes, and carries far as eye can reach,
 The freight that idle hands have seaward flung.
Over the landscape dim the nightbirds soar,
 With heavy, flapping wing and restless cry,
As darkness spreads its deeper mantle o'er
 The changing shadows of the earth and sky.

I lift mine eyes to where the stars shine out,
And live the glory that is never done.
And peace—sweet twilight's peace, lies all about,
Her victory o'er the toils of day, well won.
Far down the valley, hear the twittering note
Of some contented bird, safe home at last.
And now the moon its bright beams sends afloat,
And the last hour of twilight has gone past.

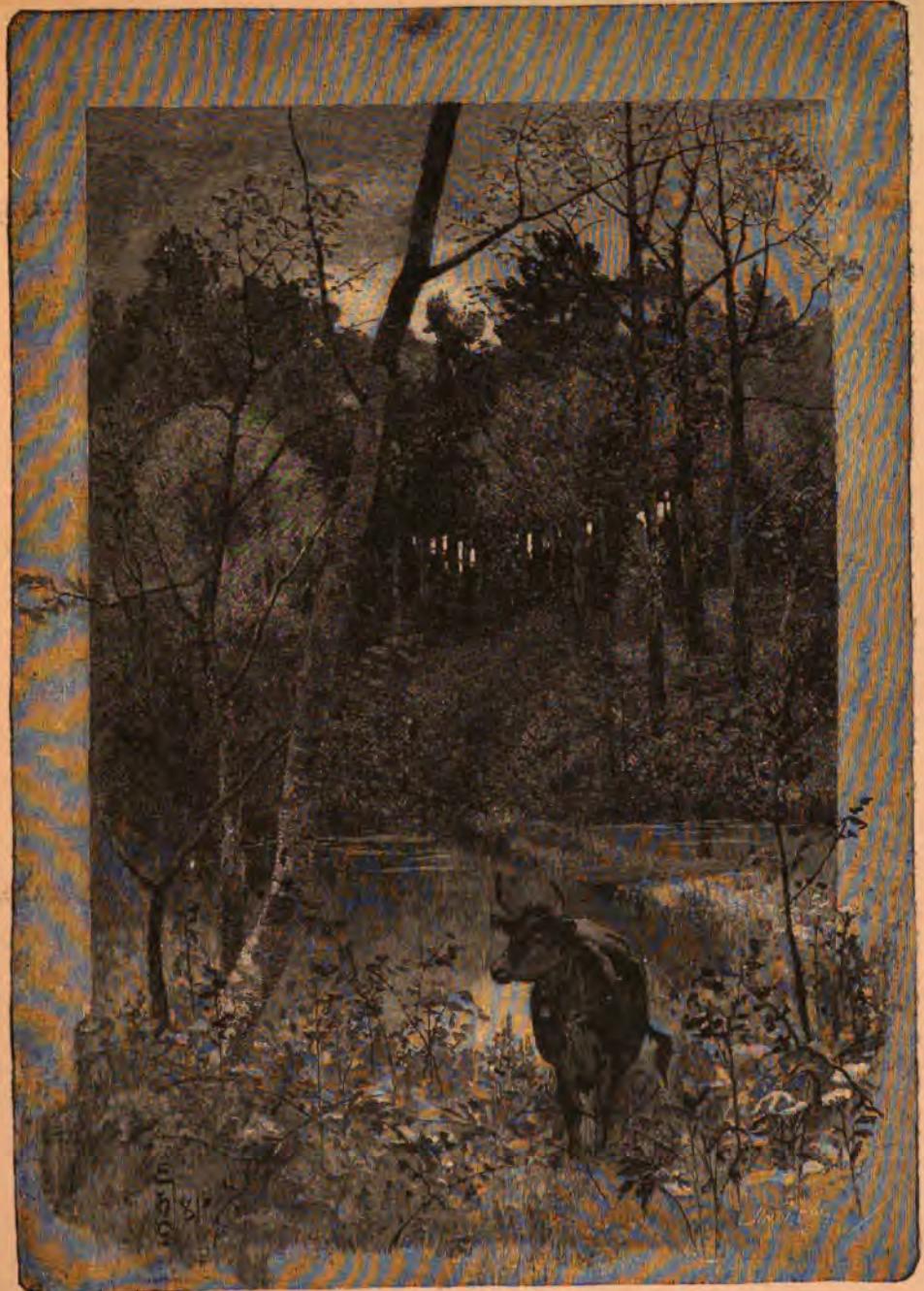
The well-tuned voices were just singing the closing line of the above song when Farmer Jones came along rubbing his hands gaily.

"Goin' to be a fine night, after all, friends, isn't it? I was afeard we'd have quite a spell of weather, but it looks fair for a fine day to-morrow. We farmer fellers jest hate a wet day out of season like pizen. But I reckon to-day ain't done no harm to crops."

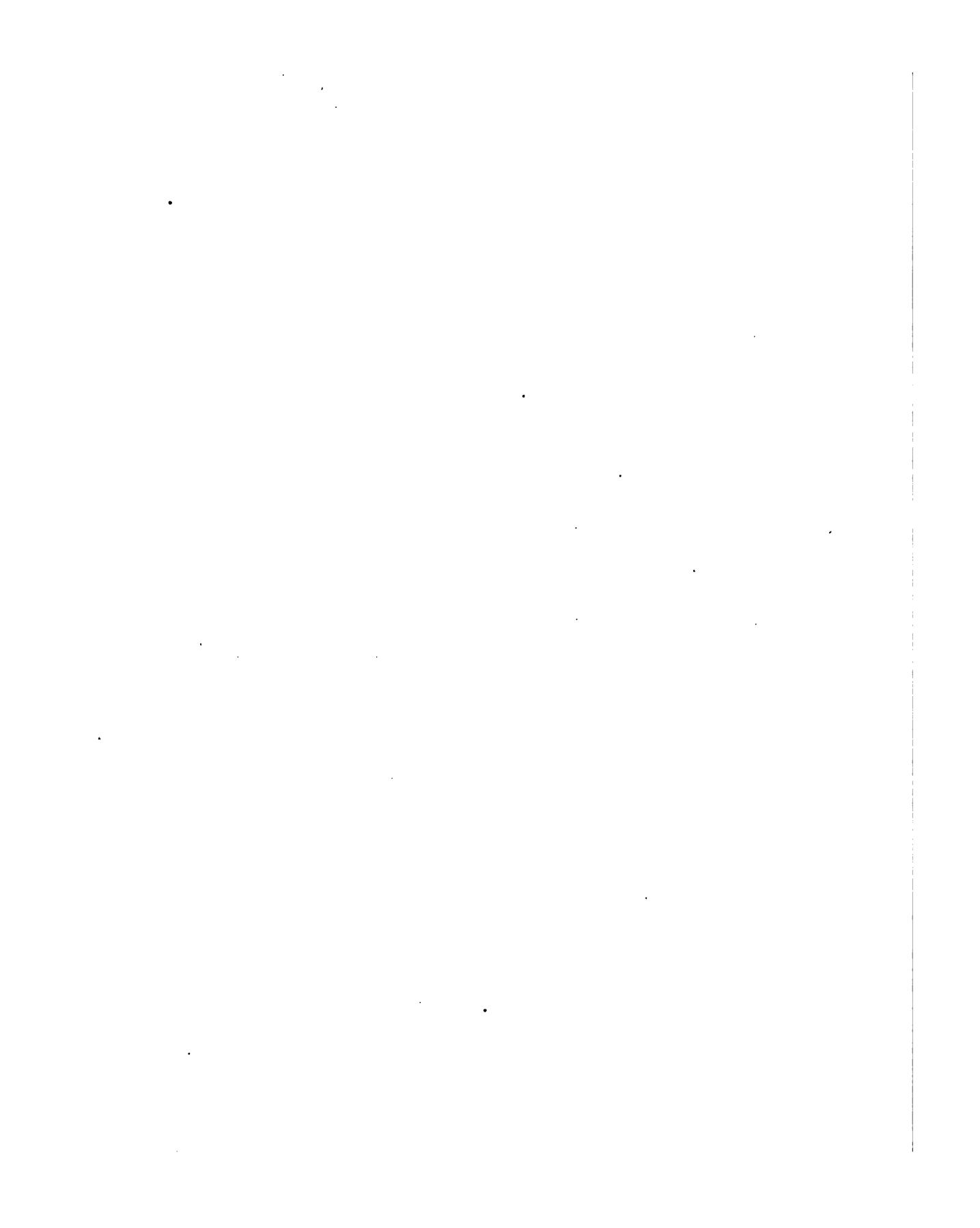
"I say, Mr. Jones!" cried Master Bobby, "can't I have a try on that old donkey of yours, I saw in the field yesterday? I'm the boss boy for riding, I can tell you!"

"H'm, 'cept when you ride a *park* donkey, and get thrown off, Bobby Reynolds!" chimed in Margie. "Remember when you got a scare and tumble in the park last winter, that time we were all there and you wanted to be so smart?"

Bobby colored in confusion. "Well you see—he—the—I—the other donkey—no, I mean the *other boy*, he didn't tell me the donkey was bad and cross, and I didn't have a fair start—you see."



THE TWILIGHT HOUR.

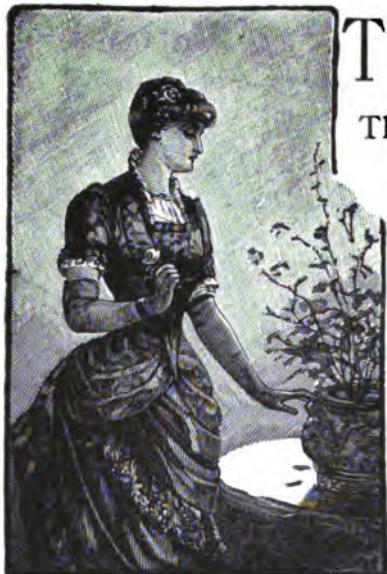


"No, but the donkey did," laughed Madge, and then Bobby held up his nose and chin, and walked indignantly away, while the girls immediately ran after him to explain that they were only in fun, and the little difficulty was soon settled.



CHAPTER XVII.

THAT LAWN PARTY AT LAST.



THE longed-for Thursday came at last, and what a beautiful day it was! There were great preparations made for the affair, such as the gathering of wild flowers, the wreathing of trailing vines about the posts of the porch, and festooning the fences near with the same. Flags which had been procured in the village, were made to float from the trees around the house, and gayly colored lanterns were suspended from wires passed around the entire lawn from tree to tree. These were to be lighted at the first approach of twilight, and Bobby looked forward to the fun of lighting them. Then there were games such as Archery, Ring toss, Quoits, Bean bags, Graces, and Battledore and Shuttlecock, and every thing to make the lawn party a pleasant and enjoyable occasion. Auntie was dressed to receive her guests at two

o'clock, and very sweet and pretty she looked, too, so the children thought. On her right arm was the bracelet—her wedding gift from Bobby, you know, and if before clasping it on, she opened the

lid of the little inserted locket, and kissed the four happy faces which smiled out at her from within, nobody laughed except Uncle George who said she was spoiling her babies, and he was afraid, too, that she loved them better than she loved him, consequently he felt himself to be an abused man.



Madge had asked permission to provide and arrange her own style of dress, declaring she had a secret, and was going to make a sensation.

So she went off by herself when dressing time came, and left Margie and Birdie to be made as fine as possible by Auntie. Bobby also did not scorn to receive the finishing touches to his toilet from the deft fingers of the Auntie who always "did things the boss way, you see."

Are you anxious to know what Madge had chosen for her dress?

In Mrs. Jones' bed-room stood the little girl, before the old

fashioned glass, and arrayed in costume to match. Of all the funny little damsels Madge had made herself the funniest. The old-style gown of Mrs. Jones, which she had found in an attic trunk, and with the farmer's wife's permission had decided to wear —was of course much too large for her, but she had concealed the loose waist by the cape which covered her shoulders. On her head she put an auld lang syne "Sunday-go-to-meeting," bonnet and—

While dimples were peeping, now out, and now in,
She "tied a true lover's knot under her chin."

And drawing on the long silk mitts which covered her plump arm almost to the elbow—the little maiden of olden times tripped lightly down the stairs and out upon the lawn to meet the astonished gaze of her family and the friends who were fast arriving.

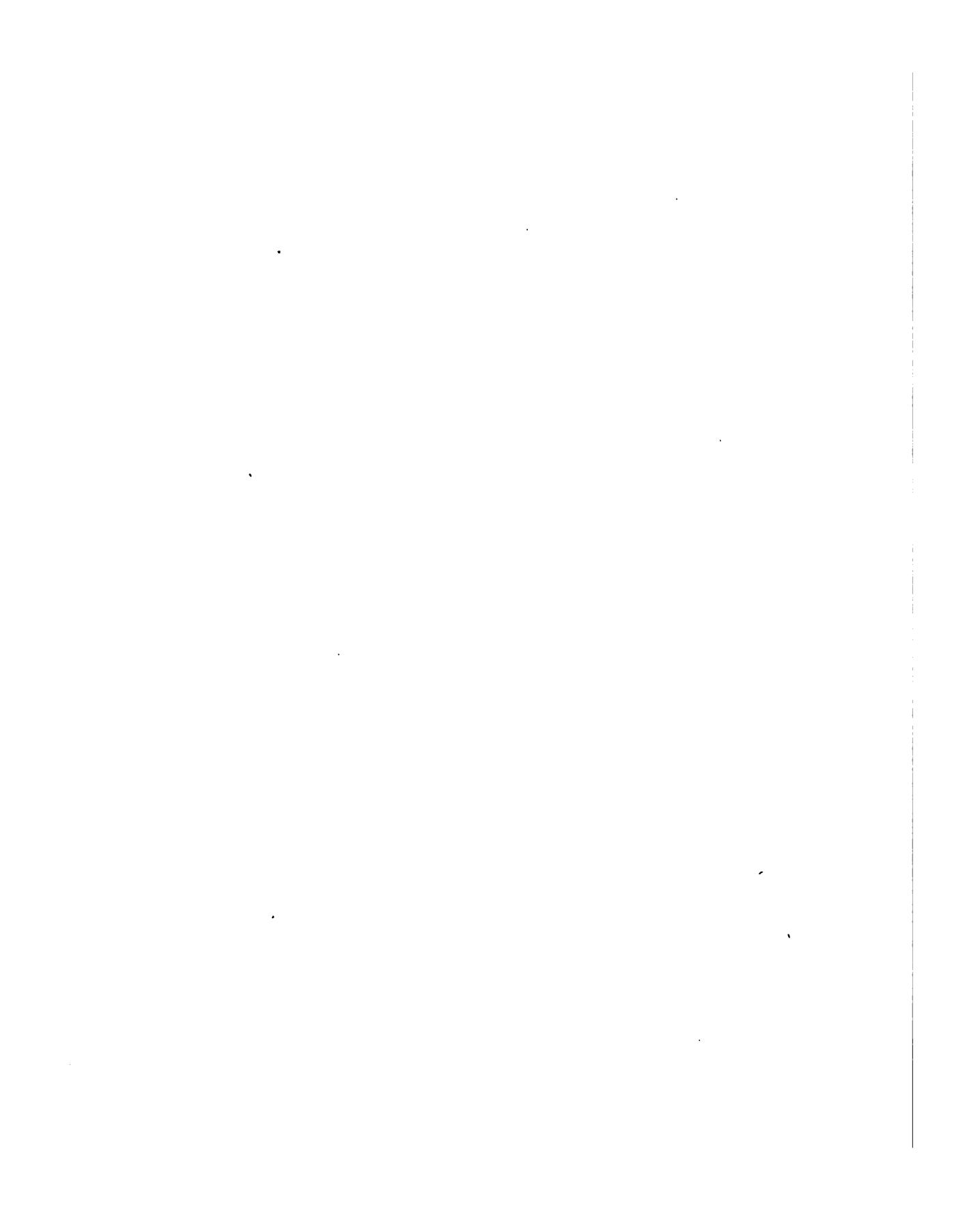
"Well, Madge Moore!" exclaimed Auntie when she could stop laughing. "*That* was your secret, was it? Come here, Mischief, and tell Auntie if you intend to act as demurely as you look to-day!"

Bob gave a long whistle, and took off his cap with a low bow to "little Grandma." Margie and Birdie said she looked "sweet enough to be squeezed," and they instantly squeezed her affectionately.

Then the fun began. Oh, I can't begin to describe it all. You must just think what you would do, all of you—on such an occa-



J.M.D.



sion, under a fair, blue sky, and with the beautiful summer's glory and gladness all about you. Bobby shot his arrows with such a vengeance that when the others decided to take a turn, lo, and behold! the arrows were—nobody could tell exactly where, and Farmer Jones said "he guessed they'd turn up'long in the fall when the grass was down."

In "Ring toss," the little boy formed a habit of trying to toss the rings on Birdie's head, instead of the pole intended to catch them, and naturally the little girl preferred to play some other game. But all the children—our own and the little invited guests—were happy and merry the whole afternoon, though when the game of "Oats—Pease—Beans" was suggested—one little boy from the village, declaring that he couldn't play unless Birdie Starr would play too, "'cause he meant to choose *her* when he got in the ring"—Bobby, growing jealous, hurried in search of the Sunbeam of the party, intending to whisper in her ear that "she ought to keep herself *out* of the ring to any one 'cept him, 'cause they were most related, you see." But Birdie was missing, and the game was postponed until at last the little girl was found with one of the ladies who had made her look sweeter than ever, by the crown of daisies she had woven for her. Of course she was more desirable now for "a partner" in the ring than even before, and the village youth most politely requested her to join the "Oats—Pease—Beans" party. Because she assented—I am sorry to say Master

Bobby was seized with a sulky fit and went off by himself until he should be coaxed to return.

To his amazement, however, nobody coaxed him ; indeed the game proceeded admirably without him, and after being miserable as long as he felt it had paid him to be so—he meekly went back to the children and asked “if he might play, too.” Pretty soon the twilight came on—and with a joyful “whoop!” Bobby and one other boy began the lighting of the lanterns. Refreshments had been served in the large tent which Uncle George had put up for the day’s pleasure, and every body was feeling in the best of humor, and prepared to applaud the pretty scene when the colored lanterns should illuminate the lawn and its floral decorations.

One—two—three—four—five—lanterns were lighted, and the boys were about applying the match to the sixth when—oh, what a gust of wind came from the West ! and, though very refreshing, no doubt, for the day had been warm—played a sad trick with the lanterns, by swinging them so violently that—puff ! flash ! up went the blaze, and the six lanterns were presently scudding in the tiniest of charred pieces of paper, all over the lawn, wherever the strong breeze chose to send them. That was too bad, but the others were lighted, and did the best they could to make up for the burned ones. Then singing was proposed and merry voices rang out in rollicking songs, old and young helping in the melody.

It was not a very welcome hour that at last warned the guests



THE LAWN PARTY.

of the necessity of saying good night. They had had "*such a good time!*" and "oh, it was so *very* charming!" and "every thing had been such a grand success!" that it was a pity the day could not have thrown in a couple of hours extra for the time.

But the good nights were finally all spoken, the sound of departing carriages had died away down the mountain road—and then our friends went speedily to their rooms and to bed. But I must tell you of one thing dear little Bobby did just after the girls had put out their light and were in bed at last. They heard a soft whisper though the crack of their door, accompanied by a low tap, tap.

"Children, are you 'sleep yet?" It was Bob's voice, and Margie replied : "No, dear, not yet."

"Well, I only just wanted to say that I—that if I've been cross to-day—an'—an' spoiled any fun for any body, I didn't mean to, an' I'm awfully sorry, 'cause I didn't have any mad inside of me, you know—only I am such a temper boy, you see, girls."

"Oh, pshaw, Bobby Reynolds," answered Madge, drowsily, "you haven't done a thing any one need fuss about—" "An' if you have—" interrupted Margie—"course we forget all 'bout it now—don't we, Birdie?"

"Yes indeed," replied Sunbeam—slipping out of bed and patterning across the floor to put her rosy lips to the crack. "An', I say, Bobby, are you lis'n'ing? I like you miles better than that other

boy, an' I wanted to be *your* partner all the time in 'Oats—Pease—Beans.' "

Bobby's face beamed all over in the darkness outside—and he softly exclaimed—"You're the boss girl, Bird Starr, and I just love you all. Good night." Then he trotted back to his own little bed, and Auntie Grace and Uncle George who had silently overheard all,—smiled as they thought in their hearts, "Dear little boy ! he will make a good, true-hearted man ! God bless him !"



CHAPTER XVIII.

THE NEXT MOVE.



LL right, Mr. Bob! if you choose to be so umperlite as to have secrets from *girls*, go ahead and have 'em."

This from Margie after she had vainly questioned Bobby concerning something he claimed to have heard Uncle George say to Auntie a few moments before. The little girls were down by the brook having a good time at "playing house" all by themselves, when Bob had come back from a walk with his Uncle and Auntie Grace, and missing his friends searched for them until he found them at last under the great trees by the brookside. Seated upon the top rail of the fence near by, he had sung to the time of his swinging feet the following mysterious lines :

" Oh, I know something jolly *good*,
An' don't you wish you knew it?"

After he had repeated these lines three times over, Madge, hav-

ing had time to set her wits to work, took up the refrain and sang saucily :

“ If you don’t tell *us* as you know you *should*,
You’ll just be sure to *rue* it ! ”

“ Oh, that’s the splendifest rhyme, Madge Moore ! ” screamed



Birdie admiringly, while Margie quoted from both poets : “ Oh, I know something jolly good, and don’t you wish you *knew* it ? ” “ If you don’t tell *us* as you know you *should*, you’ll just be sure to *rue* it.” Bob applauded, and sang his song over again. “ You’re the most provoking boy,

Bob Reynolds ! ” exclaimed Margie at last. “ I should think you’d know that gentleman boys don’t ever in this world have secrets from girls, and—say—please tell us ; if you will I’ll do something lovely for you, won’t you, Bobby dear ? ”

“ Bobby dear ” put his dirty little hands in his pockets, and looked complacently about him, but made no reply to the anxious

questioner. Madge and Birdie scorned to coax him, and went off lower down the brook where they built a fire of some dead twigs, knowing well that Bob could never resist that bait, and in order to be allowed to join them would divulge every secret he knew. And it was just at this juncture that Margie made the speech with



which this chapter begins. As she finished it, she tossed her golden head and walked off to where the other girls awaited her.

But Bob had no idea of being left, or of keeping his secret any longer, so he slipped down from the fence and followed her. "If you'll promise to play spelling game with me to-night," he said, "I'll tell you, so there now!" "All right, if you don't stick to it

that 'come' is spelled 'k-o-m-e' as you did last night, Bob," was the reply. So the secret came out at last. "Well! we're all going to the Ar—aredondacks: Now! what do you say to that?" shouted Bobby cutting a jubilant caper.

"What's the Aredondacks?" questioned Birdie, as Madge and Margie gazed open mouthed at Master Bob.

"Oh, it's a place way up the mountains in the woods where lots an' lots of big bears come and eat things, and bite people, and kill 'em. Boooooo!" poking his head at Birdie, and making a roaring noise in his throat. The little girl sprang back with a cry, and the blue eyes opened wide as saucers. "Bears? oh dear! I hope Uncle George won't take us there. Madge, please, *please* ask him not to." Bobby, seeing how really frightened Birdie was, explained that he was only "funning" and presently it all came out that Uncle and Auntie proposed leaving E—ville the following week and they were all going to have a delightful trip to the Adirondacks, which poor Bob had wofully mispronounced.

After that the girls continued their peaceful play with very glad spirits, and Bobby seeing a wild looking ox in the meadow across the road, conceived the idea of a ride on its back, and was soon astride the animal. Just then Farmer Jones came along and called out: "Look ahore, young chap, you better be a little easy now. That critter'll sarve you a trick!"

"Hi!" shouted Bob, "can't scare *me*!" and off he went. No-

body saw the rest of that ride, and nobody saw Bobby thrown from his steed's back, but he came limping down the road in a little while with two tears on each cheek, and one very big hole in



the knee of his stocking, to say nothing of a generally battered and used-up appearance which inclined people to ask if he had been hurt.

"O, Auntie, please rub my knee. I—I—fell off the ox, and I don't think they are much for riding, any how," he said, half sob-

bingly and half defiantly. And Auntie rubbed the bruised little knee, and kissed the tears from the soiled cheeks, and whispered "never mind!" so soothingly that the rough little stout arms were about her neck in a minute, and her whisper was returned with the words: "I do love you, Auntie, and I'll *try* to be a good boy to please you!"

"Who wants to help the old man in a job?" cried Farmer Jones the next morning coming into the yard where the children were at play. Up sprang Bobby. "Is it going to be fun?" he asked, "'cause I'm your man if it is!"

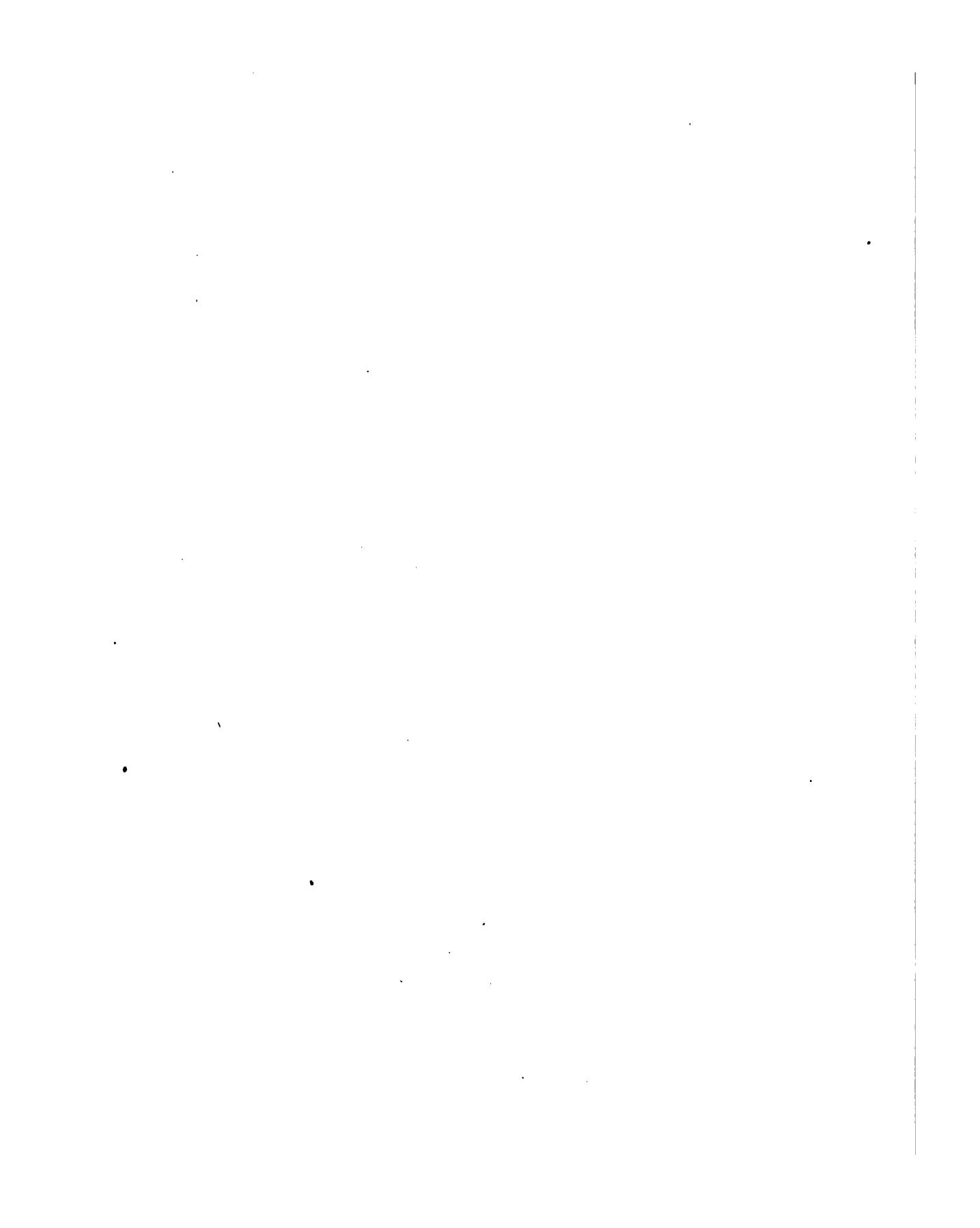
"Wal, I'm goin' to take a couple of horses to be shod a piece down the road back here, and Neddie's got to have shoes, too, so I thought mebbe you'd like to lead him along while I have the others in tow, you see." "Hi—yi! hip—hurrah!" shouted the little boy. "Here you girls, take these old jack-stones, and I'll be off." Suiting the action to the word, he was at the farmer's side and hurrying towards the barn in a minute.

And a little later the girlies beheld him going down the mountain road, walking beside gentle old Neddie, and affectionately caressing the shaggy neck and mane of the animal.

The horse-shoeing business was attended to, and then the farmer decided to go further on about some little matter with a neighbor, leaving his horses and the donkey at the blacksmiths' until his return, though Bobby pleaded to be allowed to lead them home. But



"GENTLE OLD NEDDIE!"



Mr. Jones knew enough of the little lad's rather heedless nature to make him unwilling to trust his horses, and even Neddie alone with him on the road. Consequently his refusal of Bobby's well-intentioned offer was decidedly resolute, and that young gentleman turned homeward, disgusted.

A loaded hay wagon was passing and he requested permission



to ride on the load. Up he clambered and seated himself snugly behind the driver, who was a dull old fellow given to reading a greasy novel long carried in his pocket to beguile the tedious hours of hay-carting. So as he became absorbed in his book, Bobby growing sleepy for want of a chance to talk, leaned back to rest the more easily, and, I think, must have fidgeted around some-

what to hollow out a snug nest for his little figure—for presently as the cart jolted over one of those "thank-ye-marms" we so often meet in a country road, the hay slipped from under and about him and carried the poor little boy rapidly down behind the load. His cries attracted the driver's attention, and he turned around with a broad grin upon his face just in time to see the last of Bob's heels disappear from sight,

To say that he was "tickled" wouldn't express the half of the glee with which the old fellow descended from his load and went to the rear of the cart. "Now if you'd been a country chap, 'stead o' one o' them ere city fellers as is allers thinkin' they know so much, you'd a knowed how to ride on a load o' hay!" he said, as he picked up the bewildered boy, and brushed the hay from his hair and jacket.

Luckily Bob was not hurt, but he was thoroughly "scart," to use the man's expression, and jerking himself out of the rude hands which were so clumsily brushing his clothes, he walked home fast as he could. "Seems to me, there's more things happening to bother a feller lately when he thinks he ain't doing any thing wrong, than I ever heard of in all my born days!" thought he, as he hurried, hot and dusty, over the road. But reaching home at last, his troubles were soon forgotten in the plan for a little picnic party of four in the woods near Hanging Rock that afternoon.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE WOODS.



T two o'clock our four little friends started off in high glee with their basket of good things for the "afternoon tea," which Madge thought sounded nicer than "picnic."

It was delightfully cool and shady in the woods through which their path to Hanging Rock lay. The children played hide and seek among the trees, sat down amid tall ferns and fragrant shrubs to rest and tell each other stories, and hunted for the red and pleasant tasting checkaberry with which the woods were full, and they felt almost sorry, after all, that the next week would see them off for new regions.

"Oh, hello ! I've found the boss four leaf clover !" called Bobby presently. "Now then, you girls won't have half the luck I'll have this summer."

"Ain't you mean, Bobby Reynolds ! I should think you'd kind

of hinted to us girls where it was, so's *we* could have found it. It's awful hard to find gentleman boys in this world!" This from Madge with a resigned shrug of her shoulders. Bob replied—

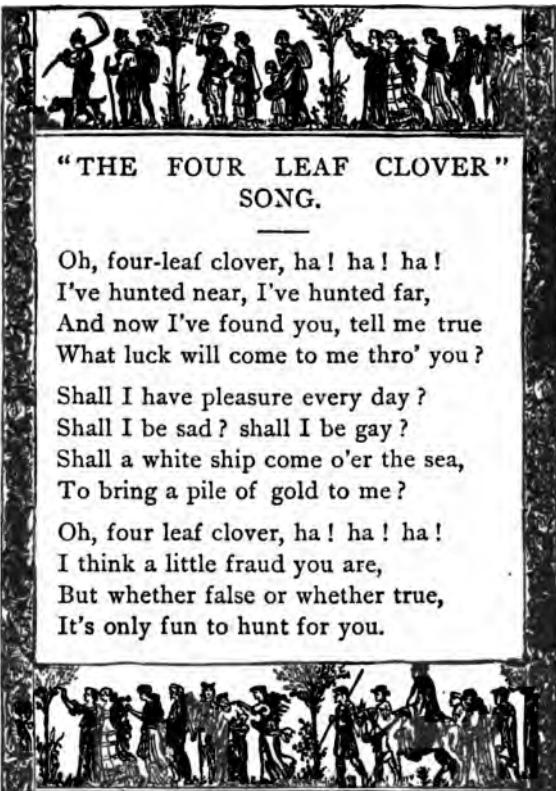
"No, I ain't mean—and I'm a gentleman boy, too, Miss Madge! you fellers oughter keep your eyes open and you'd see things same as I do. Now see here—I'll give you each a leaf of this clover—so's you'll have some luck, 'cause there ain't any thing mean 'bout *me*, you see—and I'll keep the biggest leaf 'cause I found it. Here, Bird, you first." "Oh, I don't care a fig 'bout leaves and things," said the little girl. "I'm going to look for a four leaf clover my own self; come on, girls, we oughtn't to blame Bobby 'cause he found one first—how could he help it if his eyes saw it, you know?" That seemed a sensible idea, and presently a general four-leaf clover hunt began, and Margie proposed they should sing the nursery rhyme of "The Four Leaf Clover and Good Luck."

So the young voices rang out through the woods in good tune with each other, as were the little hearts of their owners, and not only that song but as many other songs as they knew were sung there, while the sunbeams flickered through the grand old trees, and danced about under their feet, and over the moss covered path they were treading. But the favorite song was that of the clover, and it went in this way:—

The music was light and catchy, and the "ha ! ha ! ha !" was laughed out merrily, and made the little singers laugh in good earnest as they sang it.

"Now let's have another about 'Happy Little Folks Are We,' suggested Bobby, throwing himself full length upon a bed of moss under a regular "Grandpa" of a tree.

"Oh yes ! that's next prettiest to the clover song !" added Madge. So the quartette began again.



HAPPY LITTLE FOLKS ARE WE.

" Happy little folks are we !
Gay as birdies in the tree !
Free from sorrow and from care !
Of all things sweet we have our share !
Tra-la-la-la hear us sing !

Hear our little voices ring !
Laughing with a ha ! ha ! ha !
Singing with a tra-la-la ! ”

Bob came out on the ha ! ha ! ha ! with all the strength of his lungs you may be sure, and the little girls were not slow in trying to follow his example.

At last they reached the Hanging Rock where the afternoon tea was to be held. It was a lovely place, and way down in a little bit of meadow land they could see the glistening waters of a pretty brook, and hear the echoes of its song. “Now, Bob, you must find some nice smooth leaves for plates, you know,” said Madge, “and we’ll set our table on this flat white rock.”

“Mercy ! there’s a horrid old bug !” screamed Margie, rushing away from the rock, and pointing her finger at the innocent little lady bug who was taking her daily promenade and had no idea of having intruded upon a tea party. “Ugh !” cried Madge—also darting away, and shaking her dress frantically. “Take it away ! some one take it away !” she added imploringly. Birdie couldn’t help laughing. “The idea ! only a sweet, cunning little lady-bug !” she exclaimed. “Why, you needn’t be afraid of that ; see here ;” and she held out her plump, dimpled hand, where the bug in its spotted red mantle was crawling peacefully enough. Bob then returned with the leaf-plates, and the table was made ready to receive its freight of cake ; sandwiches of nice cold chicken and

dainty slices of bread ; a bottle of creamy milk—four little glasses to receive it, some berries the children had picked themselves, and last a jar of delicious jelly from Mrs. Jones' "special preserve pantry."

Such a merry afternoon tea as that was ! And weren't they a hungry little set of folks, too ! The chicken sandwiches disappeared in no time at all. The milk was speedily swallowed. The berries, the jelly, and the cake were equally relished and disposed of, and at last only the rock and the empty plates remained before the tea-partyites who were ready now for any thing else in the way of fun that might offer itself.

"Oh, let's get birch bark !" said Madge. "There's a perfect lot of it over there, see, Bird ?"

"All right," said Birdie, "so we will, and we can make napkin rings of it. Come on, Margie and Bob." "I don't want old birch bark ; it's such a foolish thing to have. I'm going down by that brook to have a wade," replied Bobby, and Margie said "I'll go with you, Bob, I don't want birch bark, either."

So they went off in the direction of the brook, clambering down from rock to rock, and finding narrow footpaths which were half hidden by growth of fern and brush, and stopping now and then to extricate each other from the thousand and one thorns which reached out to detain them, but having a grand good time all the way until the brook was reached, and Bob sent up to the rocks

above where Madge and Birdie were watching them, a triumphant shout of "All right! we're here!" Then while he, and Margie splashed stones in the water and watched the tiny fish dart about in dismay—the two girls far above pulled strips of bark from the birch trees—and planned the shape of their napkin rings, singing little duets softly together under the shade of the rocks and trees.

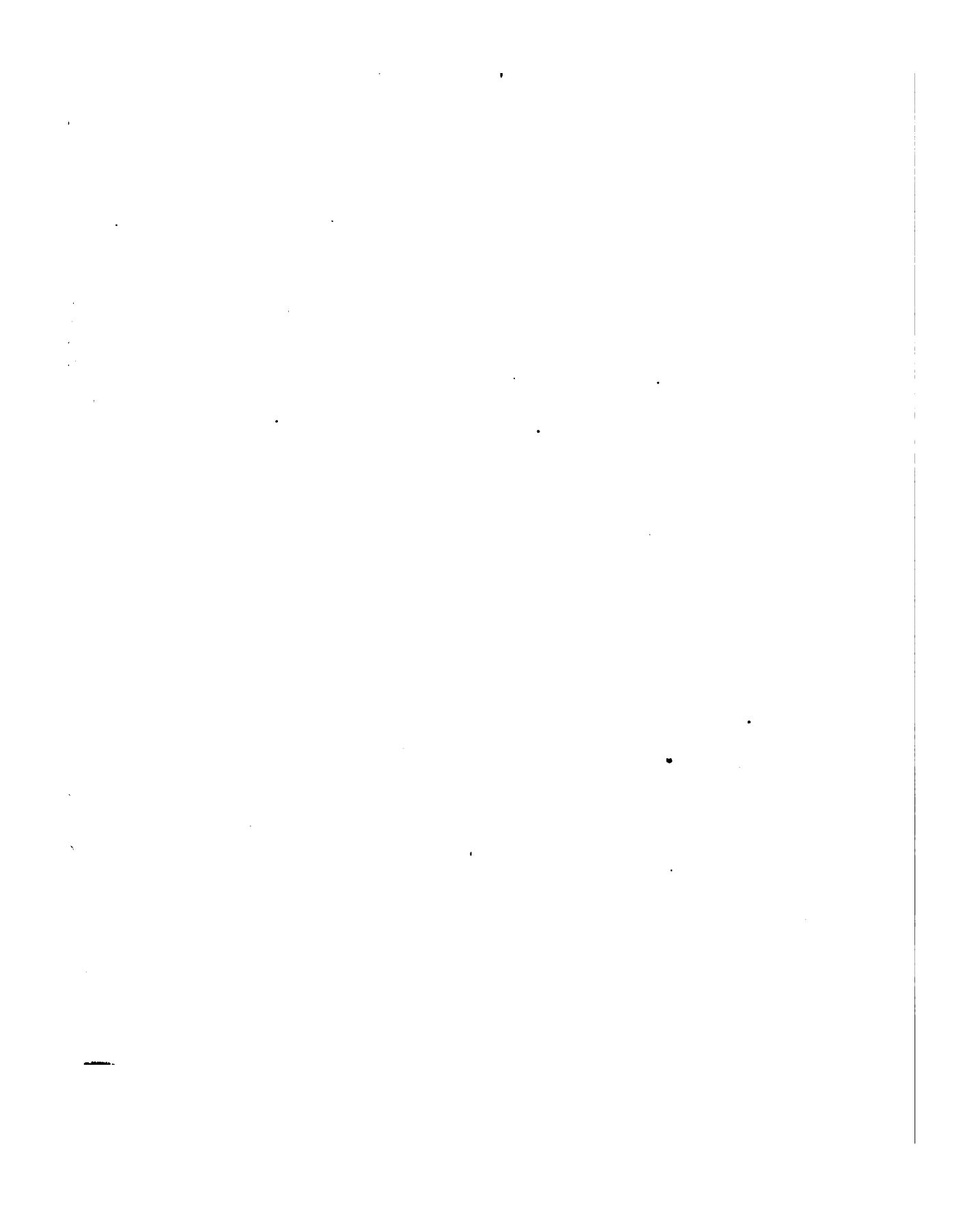
"Oh, come on, Margie, let's wade!" Bob had grown tired of tossing stones, and began to take off his shoes and stockings as he spoke. "No, I don't want to," was the reply, "but I'll stand here and watch you, Bob, only look out you don't slip and fall ker-splash."

Bob was in the water, with his pants rolled up above his knees, and venturing as far and as deep as he dared, as Margie spoke.

"Who's afraid! *I ain't!*" he laughed back, and began to cut what he called "didos" for the edification of Margie who stood on the edge of a rather steep bank and laughed at him. Suddenly the little boy waded over to the bank and sportively caught Margie's dress, just to frighten her, not with any intention of causing the mischief which followed. She jumped back to avoid him, and his feet slipping on the smooth stone he had stepped upon, of course he fell and dragged the little girl, whose dress he had clutched, speedily after him into the water, from which she presently emerged dripping from head to foot.



"WHO'S AFRAID! I AIN'T!"

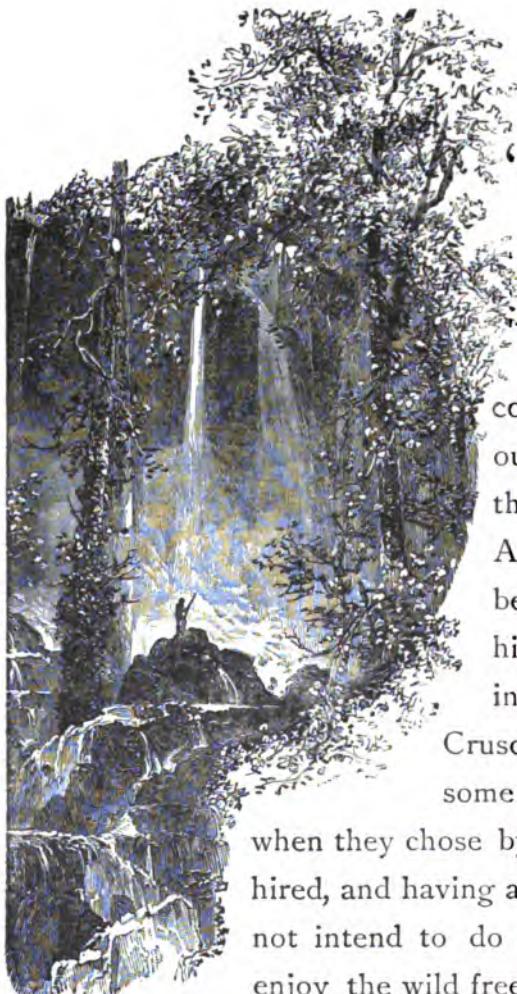


"There now, you awful, awful boy!" she cried angrily, "just see what you've done! Oh dear! oh dear!"

She sat down on the bank in the sunshine, and tried to wring the water from her skirts, and the thoroughly subdued Bobby tried to assist her. But it was no use. She was like a little half-drowned pussy, and Madge and Birdie, having heard her scream as she fell over into the brook, came tearing as fast as they could down the rocky path from above.

Poor Bobby meekly submitted to the scolding he received from the indignant sister and friend of his poor little victim, and manfully keeping his own discomforts to himself, though he was as wet as Margie, he asked forgiveness so sweetly, and made such amiable promises for the future, that they finally forgave him, and started for home as fast as possible, where their astonished Uncle and Auntie received them in due time.





CHAPTER XX.

GOOD TIMES CAMPING OUT.

"CAMPING out" beside the waters of "— Mountain Lake"! Could any thing be more perfectly delightful?

The little house called by courtesy a hotel, and in which our party had taken rooms on their arrival in that part of the Adirondacks, had been left behind, and Uncle George and his family were having a charming sort of social Robinson

Crusoe life together in the woods some miles up the lake—sheltered

when they chose by the comfortable tent he had hired, and having as a guide (though as they did not intend to do any exploring, but simply to enjoy the wild freedom of camp life for a week,

a guide was hardly necessary) a lad of fifteen years, the son of the hotel-keeper. Louis was a smart boy, and a good cook, though to be sure Auntie Grace could not be out-done in the housekeeping line, and was present to superintend the young cook's abilities. The tent was divided into three compartments for sleeping purposes, and during the day when the curtains were thrown back, a roomy space was made which the campers called their parlor. They had of course brought a boat with them, and were in fact well equipped for their week's frolic in every way. Bob was in a fever of excitement all the time, and Madge and he promised themselves no end of fun in climbing trees. Margie and Birdie were content to enjoy themselves upon the ground, both being timid little damsels and not good for much in the way of venture. Auntie Grace considered it delight enough just to lie out under the mass of green and rustling leaves, with her book or her work, or even with idle hands, and drink in with her eyes and every breath she drew, the pure sweet loveliness of scenery and air about her. Uncle George of course planned for fishing and boating, but *no shooting*. He had promised Auntie, who was so timid about guns, and almost fainted if she saw one, whether it were loaded or not, that he would forego that special pleasure of camp life, and so, much to Bobby's disgust, there was no shooting of deer or wild birds.

"Never mind!" laughed Uncle George when his nephew complained that "*every body* shot deers and things when they camped

out, and why couldn't they!"—"never mind, my boy. We are better off than most people, for we have our '*Dears*' with us, you know, and they're so *very* dear we couldn't afford to shoot them,



"OH, IT'S THE BOSS FUN."

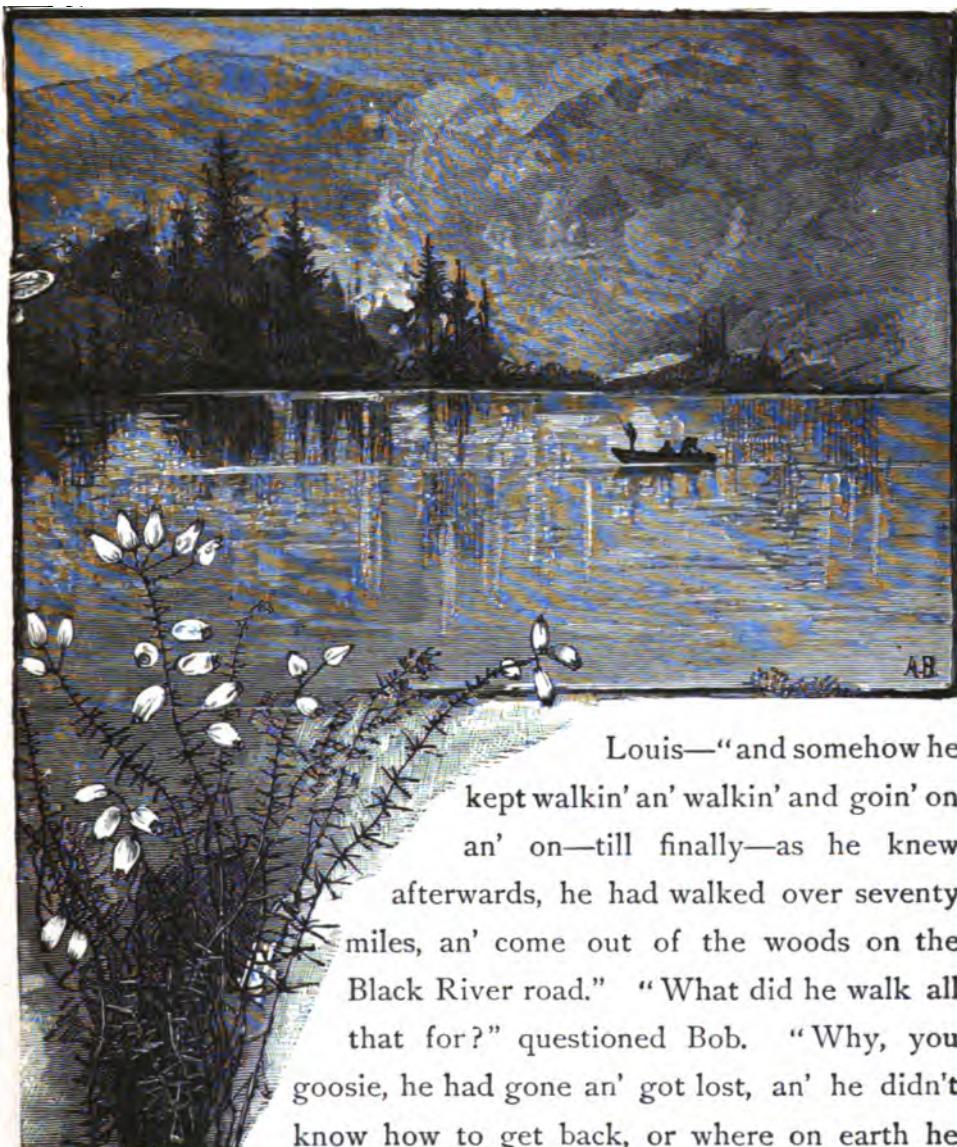
we keep them just for the pleasure of loving them." Bobby saw the fun but failed to appreciate it, merely remarking as he walked away, that "he didn't have much opinion of girl-dears,

they weren't much to hunt 'cause they let you catch 'em too easy."

Louis and Bobby became pretty good friends, and Bobby kindly undertook to correct all inelegancies of speech which he discovered in the course of the young guide's conversation, saying compassionately to Uncle George in private that—"Course you couldn't expect a country feller to talk like a boy that's a *city* feller an' b'longs to the best families, you know." And Uncle George, who had his own opinion of the "blind leading the blind," smiled and told Bobby there was no doubt about the "true inwardness of his motive," which remark Bobby felt to be quite complimentary though rather undefined. The boys had many nice walks together, and there was nothing Bobby enjoyed like giving glowing descriptions of home and city life to the mountain lad who was fired with the desire to visit and see for himself the wonderful city of New York and its glories. In turn Louis would relate hair-breadth escapes which had been experienced by some of the guides in the Adirondack regions, and even by himself and his father, and tell them so vividly that Bobby felt himself, after all, to be defrauded of half the rights of boyhood, because *he* was not born a mountain lad and ready to share the excitement of mountain life. One day they had wandered off together, and becoming tired, Bobby perched himself on the top rail of a fence, while Louis leaned beside him, and began to talk of "our city at home."

"I tell you what, Louis, a feller 'bout your age could get rich in a month nearly. Why, you just have to find a place in a store, and be real honest, you know, awful honest, and kind of careful 'bout your master's work, 'cause maybe he's watching you on the sly, you see, an' boys have to be honest, and—besides, you know, Louis, God's watching you'all the time, an' it's always better to be honest 'cause you *feel* better for it inside of you, you know, and—and—where was I? oh—and in a little' while the man who hires you comes an' says: 'You're promoted 'cause you've been faithful and you're going to get higher pay, my boy, and I trust you'll do better and better.' And there you are, getting rich right off. O, it's the boss fun, Louis, I tell you!"

Louis thought sadly of his small chance of "getting rich" in his mountain home, and determined to seek on his own account the wonderful place where all that seemed to be required of a boy was that he should be "awfully honest." "How do you know all that, you're such a little chap," asked Louis presently, and Bobby replied confidently: "Oh, *I* know all about New York, why I was born there loads of years ago, you see, and—and—why, goodness gracious! don't you s'pose a feller knows about his own city?" Then Louis took his turn again, and told about a time when his uncle, who was a guide in the Adirondack mountains, was lost in the dense woods during the extreme cold of a winter season long ago. "He just went out to take a little walk, you see," began



Louis—"and somehow he kept walkin' an' walkin' and goin' on an' on—till finally—as he knew afterwards, he had walked over seventy miles, an' come out of the woods on the Black River road." "What did he walk all that for?" questioned Bob. "Why, you goosie, he had gone an' got lost, an' he didn't know how to get back, or where on earth he

was goin'. So he kept walkin' on, till he came out that far from his own cabin. Oh, I can tell you he had awful times to keep the bears away from him. He happened to have some matches in his pocket, an' he lighted bunches of bush and evergreen, an' kept a swingin' 'em round in the faces of the animals that pestered him. An' when the matches gave out at last, he just had to climb trees, an' wait an' wait till the bears got tired and went off. When he came out of the woods at last, his feet was frozen an' his toes was cut clean off so's to save him from losing his whole legs, you know. Why, *I* was chased by a lot of wolves once, an' I just saved myself by cuttin' like lightnin' to the lake's bank, an' grabbin' some feller's boat that was there by good luck, an' rowin' to the shore across the lake. I had my dogs with me, an' the way they yelped was somethin' to hear."

Bobby shivered at these glowing accounts of perils, but boy-like he wanted to hear all he could. However, Uncle George's voice was heard calling them, and the two boys went home, and presently were out on the beautiful lake, with rods and lines enough for all the party of both "ladies and gentlemen," as Bobby said with a low bow to Birdie, when he handed her her line, and made her shudder with disgust by pointing to the fat worm dangling at the end of the hook.

CHAPTER XXI.

ABOUT THE BEARS—ALSO A TROUBLED DAY.



COME, Louis, any stories to tell to-night? Just think up something startling if you can, for the edification of the young ladies." It was Uncle George who spoke, and he drew himself nearer the cheery blaze of the camp-fire which shed its glow warmly over the little party who were gathered about the door of the tent.

"Oh, please do, Louis!" cried Bobby, pausing in his occupation of tossing sticks into the water of the lake, and turning an expectant face towards the mountain boy, who had just come up with an armful of fire-brush with which to increase the size of the already large fire. He threw his sticks into the middle of the blazing heap, and replied:

"S'pose I could rake up a story 'bout the bear-hunt what happened last summer around here."

The little girls moved nearer to Auntie, and took hold of each

other's hands, while Auntie, just a little timid herself, cast a nervous glance behind her toward the dense woods where the shadows of the twilight hour were brightened merrily by the ruddy gleam from the camp-nire.

"Well, let us have the bear story, by all means!" said Uncle George, pinching the little pink ear of Miss Birdie, and laughing at her rather frightened face. Louis seated himself beside Bobby and began his story.

*" Well, once there was a crowd of campers came up and pitched their tents a piece above here. They had a number of guides with 'em, an' made a great show. They were all city folks, you see, an' they were bound to have a good time, an' so left all their airs behind 'em.

"The ladies were kind of afraid of bears an' sich trifles, an' if one was mentioned the way they hollered was fun, I tell you!"

Here Bobby interrupted with "How do *you* know, Lou, all they did?"

"Cause I was along," replied Louis. "My uncle was one of the guides an' he took me with him. Well, one night, when all the folks had gone to bed—there was a cry from one of the guides—'Bear! Bear!' All the gentlemen jumped out of their tent an' said 'Where! where!' an' the guide he says: 'I saw him over back there in that piece of woods.'

"By that time the ladies they came out all shakin' and scary
*(A fact.)

like, an' hollered—‘Oh mercy ! *don't* let him come near us !’ Then the other guides an' the gentlemen, an' some of the ladies, they all hurried to the place where the bear was. The men folks had their guns, an' the ladies they had their tongues, you see—an' I reckon their weapons was about as useful as ours.”

“Hello, Louis, my boy, you're treading on dangerous ground, there are ladies around, you know,” laughed Uncle George, winking one eye at Auntie Grace, and looking solemnly at the little ladies near.

Louis laughed, begged pardon, and at Bobby's impatient “Oh, do go ahead with the story !” proceeded.

“Well, sure enough, there was the biggest bear you ever saw had got himself wedged between two stumps an' couldn't turn his head around, though he did give a growl now an' then sort of under his breath. The ladies cried ‘ough !’ an' I tell you, Mister Benton, they just huddled together an' said how afraid they were, an' some of 'em made off for camp as quick as they see the bear. But the gentlemen they just fired away good an' strong, an' the guides too, an' finally when the bear sort of tumbled into a heap an' sank down, they rushed over to take a look at it; an' now what kind of a bear do you s'pose it was ?”

“Pooh ! only a cow !” exclaimed Bob. The girls guessed a “wolf,” and Uncle George thought it might have been only an old stump which in an uncertain light sometimes resembles an animal.

Louis burst out laughing. "Ha! ha! it was only a shaggy cloak one of the ladies had for the cold nights, an' she had coaxed one of the guides to fix it up for her so as to look like a bear an' cheat the other folks, an' then he pretended to see it and gave the alarm an' she made believe to be scared worse than any one.

"Oh, but they were a mad set of men! an' they didn't laugh about it as much as the ladies did. But finally they all went home jokin' about it. The best of the fun was that the campers all along the lake had heard the shootin', and next day rowed up to ask about the game, an' when the joke was out, there was nothin' but a lot of questions. 'I say, how about that bear? How much did it weigh? Give us a piece of the hide. and such things.' An' now that's the bear story."

Uncle George laughed long and loud, and so did Bobby who relished jokes keenly. Auntie Grace and the little girls also laughed, but they thought "It was too bad to hoax every body right in the middle of the night."

"Let's have our camping song, Bobby boy!" suggested Uncle George, throwing away his cigar stump, and beginning:—

Oh, camping out is the life for me!
Camping out in the woods so free!
Camping out when the day is bright!
Camping out though the moon-lit night!

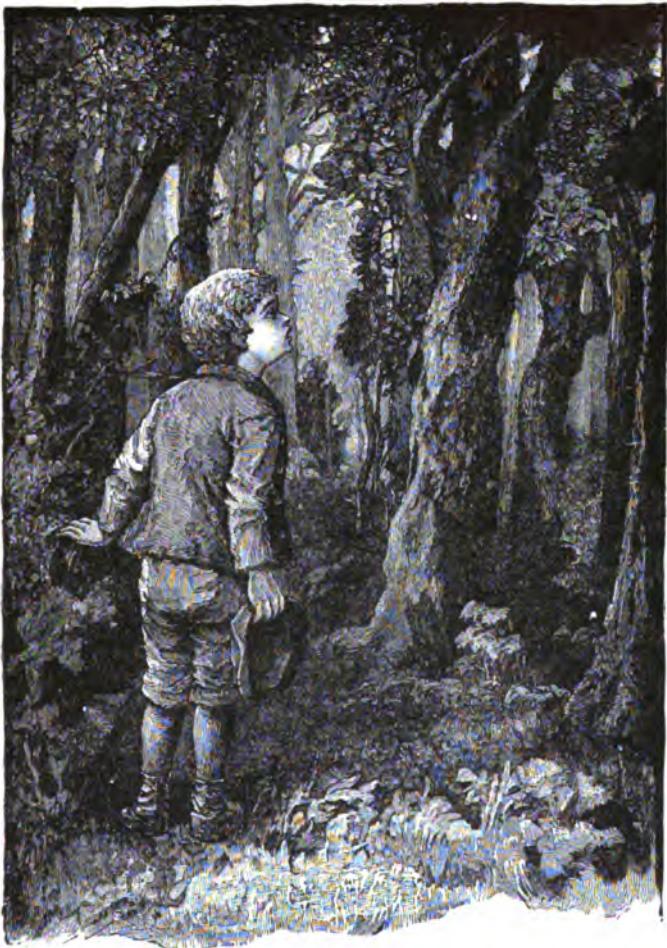
Camping out by the waters blue,
With merry faces and hearts so true,
(Chorus) Oh, camping, camping, camping camping !
Through the leafy woods we're tramping ;
All the day we're glad and free—
Camping out so merrily !

The next day dawned brightly as usual, and there was no reason why it should not glide along as smoothly as the days before it. But in the first place, Uncle George having to return to the hotel for something he wished to attend to himself, had not been willing to take Bobby with him, as the little boy had wished. Bobby consequently felt aggrieved, and the light went out of his face, while a cloud took its place. He knew, however, that coaxing would do no good, and so contented himself by digging the toe of his shoe into the ground, and kicking the leaves about furiously, and after Uncle George had called out : "Good-by, cross patch!" and waved a smiling farewell as he and Louis started down the road—Bobby had taken a solitary walk further into the woods to chew the cud of his discontent in peace.

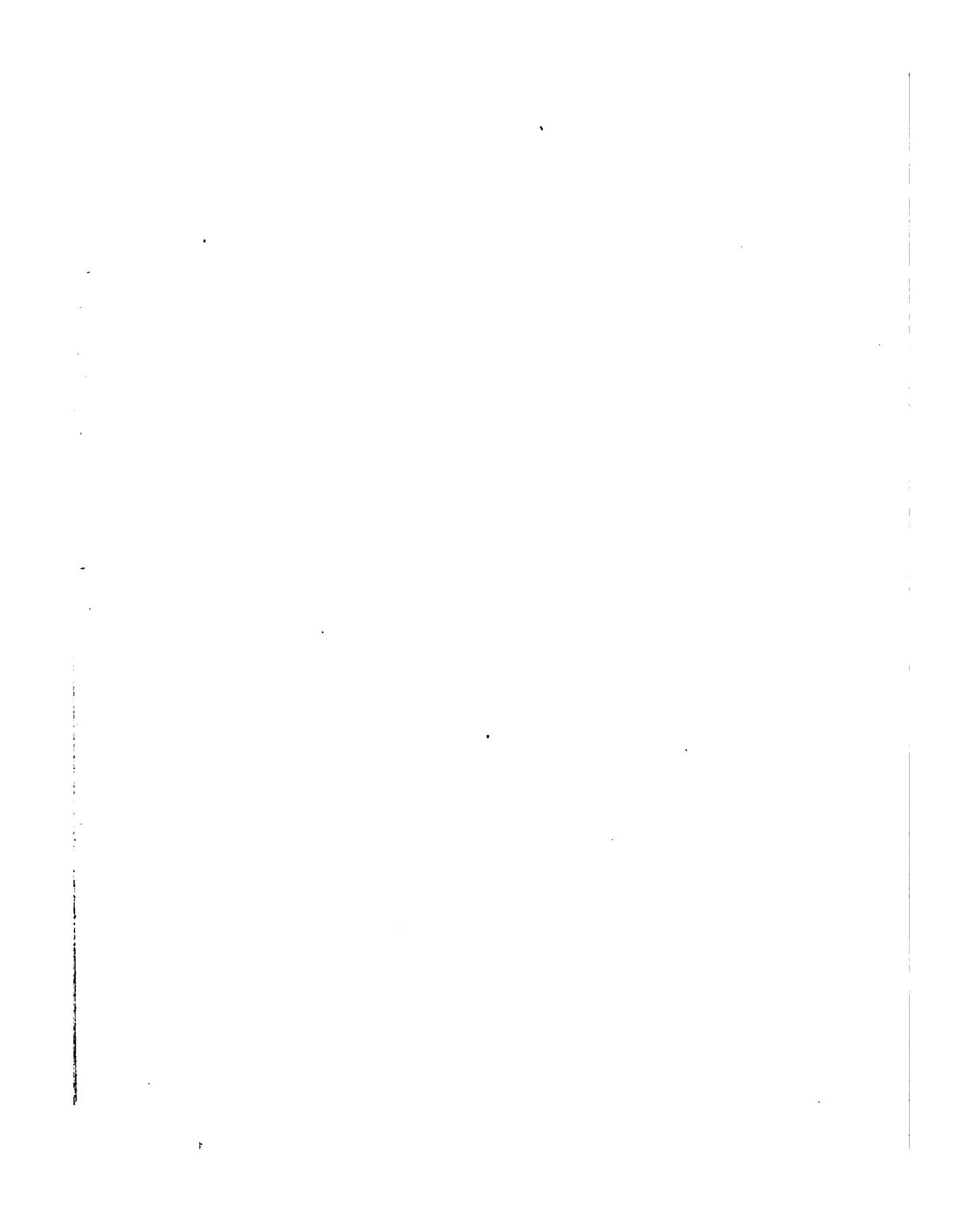
In the second place, Madge having hunted in vain for Bobby, and expressed the opinion that "She always knew he was a provoking fellow," had decided to try a few gymnastics on the lower limb of a young tree, and invited Margie and Birdie to "see her swing by her hands as Bob did."

"Now you'll fall, Madge Moore, you know you will," cried Birdie in fear and trembling, and Margie added her voice to Birdie's. But Miss Madge only laughed and shouted as she swung, and clung with her little brown fingers to the slender limb. "Oh, ho! who's afraid! here I go, here I go, here I — ough !!!"—and as her sudden scream died away, a very much jounced and sore little girl picked herself up, with Birdie's and Margie's aid, from the ground where she and the limb had landed together. "Oh dear! oh dear! my arm hurts!" she moaned, and immediately Birdie and Margie began to cry. "There now; you needn't be babies, children!" exclaimed Madge, pulling up her sleeve and finding not a broken bone as she had almost believed, but a very badly scraped arm from which little drops of blood were stealing, and made Madge's face white to look at. "My arm isn't the least bit broken, but only just kind of scraped, and Auntie can fix it all right. Don't cry, dear sweet Bird and Margie," putting her well arm around their necks and kissing them lovingly.

"Oh dear! are you *sure* you ain't most killed?" asked Birdie, wiping the tears from her blue eyes. "And are you *sure* you won't die?" sobbed Margie anxiously. "I b'lieve I shall if you don't hurry home with me and let Auntie cure my arm," was Madge's somewhat impatient reply, for the wound was beginning to smart. So they "hurried up," and were soon at the tent where Auntie sat peacefully writing letters. She bandaged the wounded



LOST!—BOBBY IS TROUBLED BY MEMORIES.



little arm, and at Madge's suggestion, "kissed the spot to make it well," and then the three girlies decided to go in the tent and play some quiet game together.

So an hour passed and it was long past twelve o'clock. "We will have our little luncheon now, I guess," said Auntie, "and Uncle George will probably take his at the hotel before he returns. He is later than he thought he would be."

"I'll call Bobby," said Birdie jumping up and running outside where she presently sent her sweet voice ringing through the still woods, and over the lake with : "Bobby! Bobbeee! Bobby Rey-nolds!" But no shrill whistle answered the call, and Margie joined Birdie adding her voice—"Bobbeee-ee! Oh, why *don't* you answer, you Bobby Reynolds?"

"Oh, leave him alone!" exclaimed Madge. "He's just the awfulest teaser that ever was born in this world! *I* sha'n't call such a boy! He wouldn't answer me when I called him this morning, and I'm just disgusted!"

"He'll come along presently," said Auntie. "The dear boy has found a squirrel, I suppose, and is chasing it up the tree, it would be just like him! We'll save his luncheon, and now let us have ours." So they sat out under the trees, beside the blue waters of the pretty lake, and ate the dainty luncheon Auntie had prepared, wondering much what detained Bobby.

CHAPTER XXII.

BOBBY IN TROUBLE.



BOBBY had walked on aimlessly at first, only thinking of what a pity it was that uncles should treat little boys as unkindly as his uncle had treated a little boy he knew about.

"Don't see *why* it wasn't convenient to take me same as that Louis! I'd have had no end of fun, and I'd have climbed all the trees and chased all the squirrels, and I'd have coaxed uncle to stay just as long as he could, and I'd have—oh, I'd have 'em think I was lost by skyting behind trees and things, and having fun jumping out at 'em." These were the thoughts which kept little Bobby so busy during the first part of his walk that he didn't notice how far, or just in which direction, he was going. And it is just possible that Uncle George, who knew that he would have to go to the hotel and return as soon as possible, and who also was well acquainted with his small nephew's habits and mischievous fancies, had declined Master Bob's company for reason

of those very things which the little boy had been thinking over.

By and by, Bobby began to feel pretty hungry, and decided to retrace his steps. But where was he? He had no remembrance of having seen that part of the woods before. He looked about him utterly confused and bewildered. Then he walked rapidly on, thinking the familiar path over which Louis and he had often walked, would soon come in sight. He would know it well enough by the well peeled birch trees, and certain stunted old trees which he had climbed. But the path he looked for was not to be found, and pretty soon Bobby's brave whistling, with which he had tried to keep up his courage, died away, and the rosy color began to pale in his cheeks, and now and then just a *little* tear gathered in each brown eye, and slipped down towards his chin. They were wiped off on the dusty jacket sleeve, and poor Bobby's troubled face began to present a very strange appearance of dust and tears in streaks.

Then, too, the hungry feeling grew upon him, and he would gladly have eaten a chip if it had been possible to digest such food. "I never knew what a horrid feeling comes inside of a feller when he's hungry, before this," thought Bobby plaintively. "I declare, I'll never let a beggar come to our door and go 'way with nothing to eat, after this, I tell you! wonder if this is how they feel when they say 'please gimme some cold vittles!'"

Bobby sat down by the path to think over his situation.

Here it was getting on in the afternoon. The shadows were beginning to grow darker in the always dark woods.

He remembered the bear stories Louis had told, and he even fancied he heard a growl. Oh, what should he do ! the poor little lost boy started up in new alarm and listened with both ears as wide open as they could be. But no ! that wasn't the growl of a bear ! it was only one of those little croaking tree toads which hide in the bark of trees and sing songs which nobody admires save themselves.

So Bobby went on relieved, but still troubled, for to be lost in the woods is no joke, you can understand, even about a quiet country place, but in the wilderness of the Adirondacks !—oh, no wonder poor little Bobby was frightened. He remembered the naughty thoughts with which he had begun his walk, and in fact all the naughty things he had ever done came up before him and seemed to take shapes pointing terrible fingers towards him. In his despair he fancied himself a great deal naughtier than he really was, for to tell the truth Bobby was a dear, good, and above all, a truthful boy, and we can pardon other faults more readily if there is always truth, and a heart void of deceit to be found in the culprit.

By and by, when it grew yet more lonely and gloomy in the woods, Bobby's courage failed entirely, and he cried aloud : "Oh

dear, I shall never see dear mamma again,—and I haven't even answered her last letter, 'cause I was so busy playing!—nor Auntie nor Uncle, nor Madge and Margie and Birdie, and boo-boo-o-o-o—I shall be-be-be-eat-eat-eaten all to pieces by tho-those awful, hate-hateful bears! Oh-o-o-o!" At thought of the bears, Bobby could stand it no longer, to be right there on level ground where a bear could jump out of a bush at him! no indeed! with one frantic spring he was up the nearest tree and hidden among the boughs. There he finished his crying, and then fell asleep from exhaustion.

And all this while do you think the dear Auntie and little girls were not alarmed? Indeed they were, and when Uncle George and Louis returned from the hotel, they found four very anxious faces, and four pairs of eyes which showed traces of tears.

"I am so afraid he has fallen into the Lake and been drowned," said Auntie, when she had explained the cause of their anxiety. "Oh, we *know* he has been killed by bears!" sobbed Madge, all her previous resentment against the missing little friend vanished long before. Margie and Birdie shook their golden heads and looked pictures of despair, and Birdie, finding Bobby's little ulster hanging in the tent, went and laid her wet cheeks against it lovingly, and made a little prayer in her heart that "God would take care of her friend Bobby and please not let the bears catch him." Uncle George growing frightened himself, started with

Louis at once to search for Bobby. Louis laughed at their fears, declaring he knew every niche of the woods about there, and that he'd soon have the lost boy back again.

Well, to make a long story short, I will say here that Bobby *was* found at last, and had been awakened from his sleep by Louis' shrill shout. He quickly slid down from the branches of the tree, and stood trembling and laughing hysterically before his uncle and the young guide. "Oh, Uncle George, I'll never be naughty again, or complain, or fret, if you'll only forgive me this time!" he cried, clinging to the gentleman's hand, and Uncle George lifted the little boy in his arms and soothed him as if he had been a baby, and Bobby was too happy to resent the treatment he would at another time, perhaps, have considered "only fit for girls."

It is hardly necessary to describe the reception given to the friend who "was lost and had been found," by the Auntie and the little girls in camp.

That he was the hero of the hour can be believed, and that he felt his importance in good time, (that is to say, after he had recovered from his fright, and had begun to be himself again,) may also readily be imagined. And thus ended the fifth day of camp-life for our party.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A LITTLE WHILE IN THE CATSKILLS.



N the wing again, our party of seven ! This time homeward bound, but meaning to take things very pleasantly and leisurely on the way. "To the Catskills ?" asked Uncle George merely as a suggestion, and Auntie Grace said " Why not ;" more in the way of a decision than a question. The children, glad to go any where where there might be found

fun and good times and plenty of freedom, of course put in their votes for the Catskills, and so one lovely day found them located in the pretty little village of——. "No hotel for me !" implored Auntie, and Uncle George speedily settled them all in one of the numerous farm houses about. "After all !" said Bobby the next morning, as he and Madge seated themselves comfortably on the most dangerous part of the highest beam in the old barn, and swung their restless feet back and forth with as little fear as though, like Margie and Birdie, they had been snugly ensconced

in the hay loft,—“after all, I think it’s no end nicer to be here than up in the woods where a feller can get lost, and where you don’t know the minute a bear won’t bite you !”

“ Oh, of course ! ” was Madge’s reply. “ Only, you see, Bob, I used to like the lake, and the trees were jolly, you know. Oh, Bob, look ! there’s a hen down there on the loft, and I say ! she’s likely got a perfect bushel of eggs in her nest. I’m going to drop down and hunt for ‘em. Come along ! ”

“ All right ! ” answered Bobby, preparing for a jump into the hay beneath him.

Up started the two little damsels who had been snuggling in the fragrant hay reading together, and up rose two imploring voices with the words : “ Oh, *don’t* jump ! don’t, don’t, Madge, you’ll break your poor neck ! ”

“ Pshaw ! who’s afraid ! ” was Bob’s reply, “ only I’m going to jump near the nest; and scare the old hen.”

Madge deciding that prudence was the better part of valor, contented herself by dropping cautiously from the beam to the broad ledge below, and thence down to the hay, and Bob meanwhile sprang with might and main intending to land beside the nest, and give the hen, as he said, “ a big scare.” Well, *she* got the “scare,” and *he* got into a pretty mess of—what do you think ? He had landed directly among a dozen eggs upon which poor Mrs. Biddy had been setting until his near approach frightened

her from her nest, and just as she flew squawking to the barn floor, Master Bobby came down plump into the eggs and emerged from the hay in one minute after, to present a most ludicrous and also pitiable appearance. How the little girls did laugh when they saw him, and Madge unfeelingly danced along the barn floor singing in high glee—

“ Oh, look at him ! whoever did see
So queer a looking boy as he !
He went and jumped and put his legs
Right into Mistress Biddy’s eggs.
Oh, Bobby was a pretty fellow
Until he turned himself all yellow ! ”

“ Come, you stop that, you, Madge Moore ! ” shouted the uncomfortable Bobby, clambering down the side of the loft, and conscious that pieces of hay and straw were clinging to the sticky yellow mass on his stockings. “ You just stop poking fun at a feller when he’s down already ! I say Margie and Birdie, just give us a hand, will you, and get me cleaned off. I wish there were no eggs in the world. ”

“ Then you couldn’t have omelets and things you like,” said Birdie, as she diligently rubbed Bobby’s legs with dry wisps of straw, and pitied him with all her tender little heart.



"Well, then, I wish hens laid omelets 'stead of such liquid eggs," said Bobby, for the present feeling that he had seen all of eggs he cared to see.

When they went up to Auntie's room a little later, it was her turn to laugh, and laugh she did, till poor Bob was glad to rush away from them all.

An hour or so later when he was wanted he couldn't be found. "Oh dear!" wailed Madge. "I do hope he isn't lost again!"

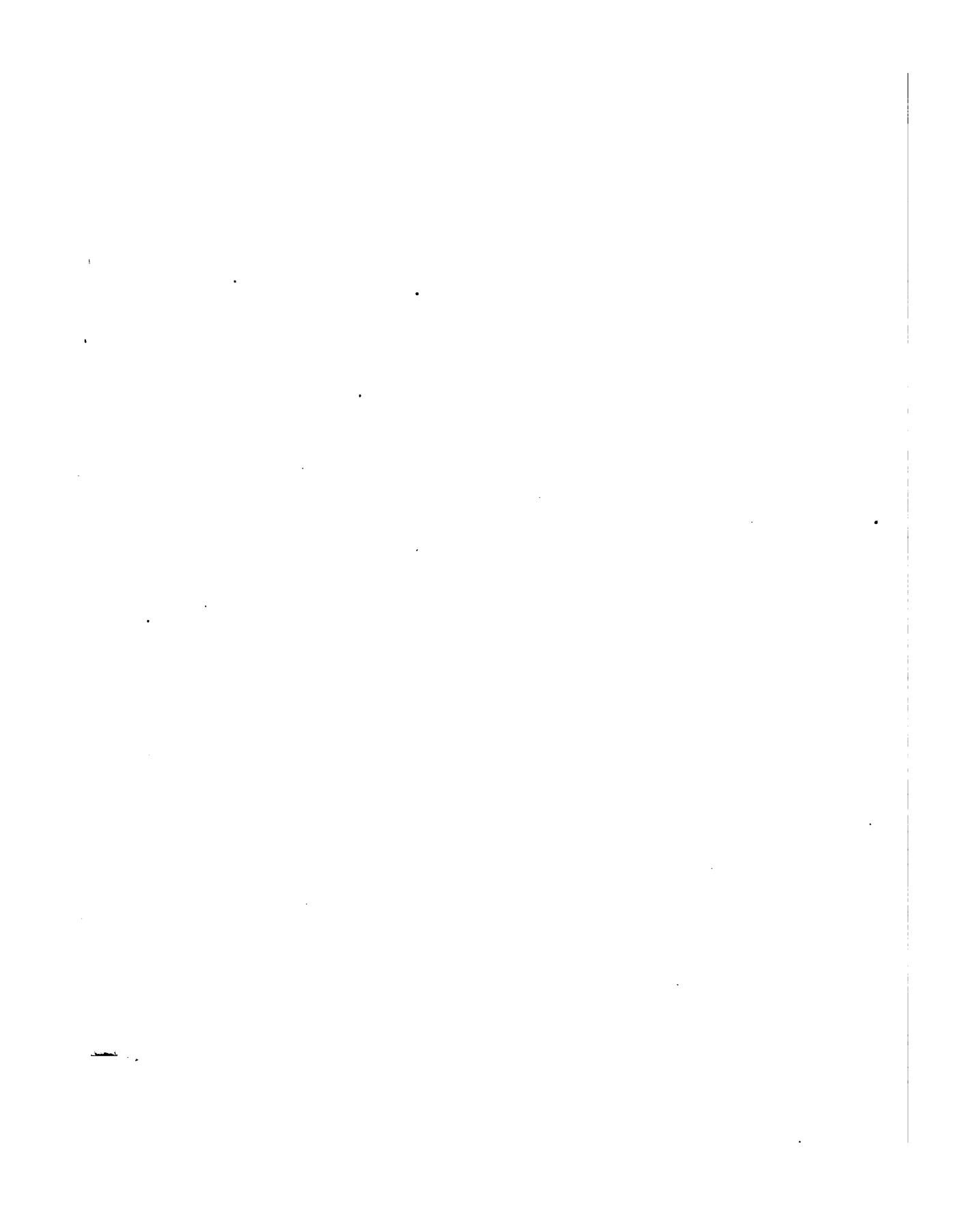
"Let's go over by the pond!" suggested Margie. "I heard Bob say, as we came up from the depot yesterday, that he was bound to have fun there. Don't you know we saw it just a little teeny way from the road down here!"

"Oh yes!" chimed in Birdie. "*I* remember! didn't it look just lovely with the sun shining on it? just like a dear lovely pond we have at home in Milford, you know, Madge!" Then a sudden thought occurred to the little girl, and drove the smiles from her face.

"Oh girls, *do* you s'pose Bobby's tumbled in and—and—drowned himself?" she asked in a whisper. That dreadful thought paled the cheeks of the other two little folks quickly, and there was an immediate rush in the direction of the pond. Madge easily outstripped the younger girls, and was presently joined in her race by a small urchin who wanted to know if any body was killed. Madge did not wait to answer his question, and



BOBBY MAKES NEW FRIENDS.



he ran after her to find out for himself the cause for such haste. Birdie and Margie came panting after them, and so excited each other with their dreadful apprehensions of some accident having befallen Bobby that they could scarcely breathe when at last arriving at the bank of the pond, they beheld the object of their anxiety calmly and comfortably lounging on the grass and watching the voyage of a toy ship, while two little girls—red-cheeked and plump country children—were watching him in admiration.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Madge staring at the strangers who had so soon won Bobby's favor.

"Neither did I ever before!" returned Bob, looking up at Madge and winking one saucy brown eye.

Margie and Birdie then added their "say," and while Margie somewhat indignantly questioned why Bob couldn't stay home and play with his own relations, Birdie mildly suggested that "they seemed to be nice little children and it would be real fun to play with 'em too." Bob meanwhile arose and politely introduced his new friends as Hattie and Mamie Brown.

"I was just coming along here, you see," he explained, "when these little girls got their ship upset somehow, and if it hadn't been for Bob Reynolds they'd been in a nice fix, I tell *you*! So I just put things in shape for 'em and now we're first rate friends, ain't we?" turning to the two little strangers and feeling himself every inch the true gentleman.

"Oh yes indeed!" chorussed the children to whom he spoke, "and we're much obliged to you," added the younger one, who stood on the bank with a dolly in her arms, "for helping us."

Then little Birdie moved nearer them and held out her hand. "We would like to know you too," she said, "and it will be nice to play all together here. Oh, I'm *so* glad, the gladdest that ever was, that Bobby isn't drowned!"

"Yes, you scared us most to death, you awful boy!" said Madge, not quite sure yet whether she cared to "take in" the new girls. But Margie joined Birdie and held out her hand also to the strangers.

"Drowned? who's going to drown?" cried Bobby. "Guess I've got something better than that to do. Hi! let's have some fun, girls!" and in a minute the brown, curly noddle was on the ground and the knickerbockered legs were kicking high in the air to the astonishment of the new little friends and the delight of the others, and it wasn't long before the ice was broken all around the circle, and a very happy hour was passed under the trees beside the pond.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BOBBY AND BIRDIE AS CONSPIRATORS.



'M for a walk, children,' called Madge, one day. "I know a lovely place where we can get mosses and ferns, and—oh! I've just thought of it! Let's fix up Auntie's room while she's down in the village, and when she comes home she'll be surprised!"

"Pooh! I know more fun than that," said Margie. "I heard that boy Jim, the chore boy, you know, I heard him telling Mr. Clarke that it was a nice day for the birthday, and I asked him afterwards what birthday, and he said Mrs. Clarke's birthday. So, now, I think it'll be lots of fun if we just get mosses and ferns and fix up the parlor in honor of her birthday, don't you? I guess she'll be surprised enough when she comes in from the kitchen and sees how we've fixed it."

"Oh, that'll be jolly!" shouted Birdie, and Bob, who was whittling a whistle, blew his approbation of the suggestion with a shrill noise which made the girls jump.

"Come on, then!" said Madge, and the four friends went with

a hop, skip and jump down the lane. The ferns and gay mosses were gathered, and then Margie proposed that they should be hidden safely under a stone beside a little brook, while they extended their walk and saw a little more of the place about them.



So they went on entertaining each other with stories and conundrums, till at last Bobby whispered to Birdie, "I say, Bird, let's

have a real lark and hide from the others, will you? It's awfully tame just walking along and telling a lot of yarns, don't you think so?"

Birdie, in a spirit of mischief agreed, and presently, while Margie and Madge were speaking together, the two little conspirators, Birdie and Bob, flew off into a piece of woods near by, and cuddling behind a tree, laughed softly to hear the others wondering where they had gone, and watched them looking up and down the road in search of their lost companions.

"Very well!" at last exclaimed Madge. "I know just as well as any thing that those two children are just trying to frighten us, and *I'm* not one bit scared, are you, Margie?" This in loud tones, so that if Bobby and Birdie were near they might understand how foolish they were.

"Scared!" cried Margie, with a world of contempt in her voice. "Well, I guess I'm not! When a big, horrid *snake* comes crawling along and hisses at 'em and bites 'em, I guess they'll wish they'd stayed with us—so there, now. Come on, Madge; don't let's wait for 'em!" So the sisters walked on, leaving Bobby holding Birdie fast to keep the timid little girl—whose heart had given a big jump at the mention of snakes—from racing after her friends.

"Now hold on, Bird Starr, you needn't be afraid. I'll take care of you!" he whispered. "You'll spoil our lark, and—and who's

afraid of *snakes*, any how! They can't hurt—ough, what's that?" jumping up and away from some noise that sounded in the grass near by.

"There, you're afraid yourself, Bob Reynolds," said Birdie, running after him and clinging to his arm. "Oh, do let's go after the others. I don't care about larks, and——"

But Bobby, finding the noise to proceed only from a little "hop-toad," grew bold again, and succeeded in coaxing Birdie to walk a little way further in the woods with him.

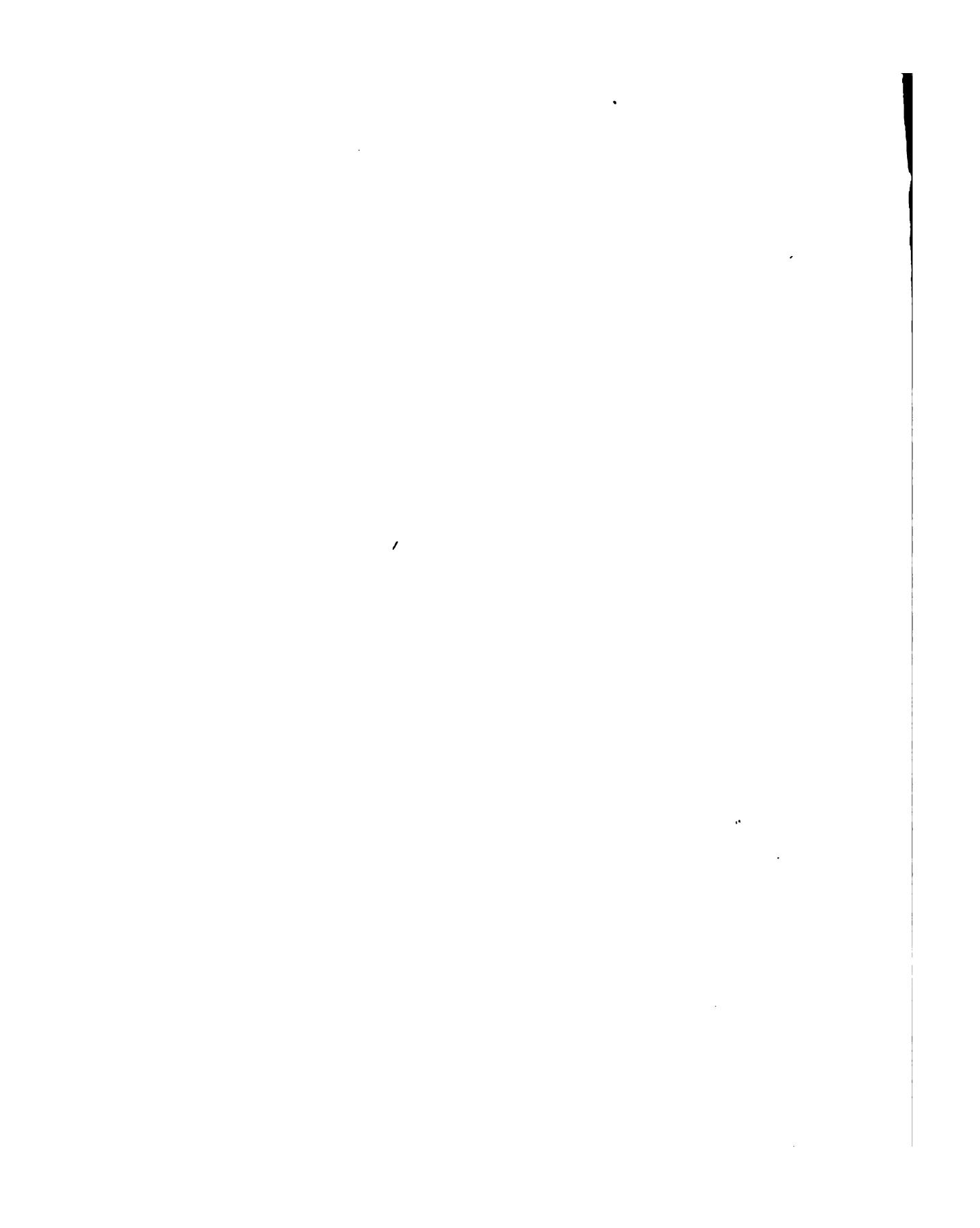
Meanwhile Madge and Margie had walked on until near the gate which led to the lawn belonging to the farm-house. They saw Uncle George on horse-back, and talking to Jim, the chore-boy. To Uncle George they related the grievance of Bob's and Birdie's desertion, declaring they were never going to speak to them again for—for—well, a *week*, at least.

Uncle George laughed. "To think that little Miss Birdie has so much mischief in her after all!" he exclaimed. "Why, I honor her for it, children; I didn't think the timid little thing could play a joke on you two. That's right, that's right! I'm delighted to see she has *some* mortal traits, after all."

"You always do take Bird's part, Uncle George," pouted Madge, "and *I* think she's been very naughty, so now!" Then they went up the long path to the house and found Auntie, who had returned from the village, watching for them.



TENDERLY GALLANT.



"Oh, dear! now we've gone and forgotten our ferns and mosses!" complained Margie, and Madge explained to Auntie Grace how Birdie's strange behavior had spoiled all their plans for Mrs. Clarke's birthday. Auntie laughed as heartily as Uncle George had, and said she was glad of it, and so Madge and Margie grew still more indignant. But in a few moments, when a black cloud came up and shut the sunshine out of the sky, and large drops of rain began to fall, the indignation of the little sisters changed to anxiety, and they were in despair because Birdie would get wet. Meanwhile, how about Bobby and the small damsel who had begun to grow heartily tired of the "lark" by this time?

"Oh, Bobby, I felt a drop of rain on my hand!" she exclaimed.
"Do—do hurry home."

Bob lifted his head and threw it back. "Yes, sure enough, I feel some water on my face," he replied, "and, jiminy! look there, Bird, isn't *that* a big black cloud? Tell you, we're in for rain and no joke!"

"Oh dear, oh dear me!" groaned little Miss Birdie, "I just hate this kind of a lark, Bob Reynolds, and I wish you wouldn't have such trifling plans. And there's my hat lost, too; you said you'd hunt for it, and you didn't, and Auntie Grace'll be so vexed with me! oh, dear!"

To tell the honest truth, Master Bobby had not much relish for plunging into the deep grass and brush, (in the direction of which

Birdie's light hat had blown from her head,) to look for it, when, for all he knew to the contrary, there might be a host of snakes hiding there. So he had put off the search until now that Birdie reminded him of his promise, he could not delay any longer. But while they talked together, down came the rain ! a bright, beautiful shower to be sure, but not very pleasant or comfortable to the two children who were not prepared for it.

"I'm glad I've got on this old cap, any way !" said Bob ; "here, Birdie, you put it on that darling little head of yours ; I don't mind the rain."

But Birdie chanced to have with her the little shawl which the children sometimes carried to put on the ground to sit upon, and she preferred to hide herself under that. So Bobby, with tender gallantry, wrapped it about her golden head and little shoulders and remarked : "I say, Bird, I'm awfully sorry 'bout all this scrape. I didn't mean to get you in this fix, you know, and I'm no end sorry."

To which Birdie replied : "I'm not the leastest bit angry, Bobby, and I didn't mean to speak so impatiently to you either. Isn't it fun to think that for all the sky is so dark now, the sun is behind the clouds all the same, and—and—we'll all be bright again by and by."

"H'm !" said Bob, with a comical expression on his face, "I'm afraid we'll find extra clouds waiting for us when we get home.

I'll go get your hat now, Bird; you wait here." So he darted bravely into the tangled brush and foliage in search of the missing article, but returned without it at last.

"Oh, well, I lost my hat once before, at home. The wind took it up a tree, don't you remember, Bob? Margie was there, and you climbed the tree and got it, and got your pants all dirty?"

"Oh, yes!" said Bob, "I guess I do remember! And you and Margie had been scolding me for trying to catch birds. I remember! Didn't we have fun that summer? Say, Bird, we'll all be there again next year, may be. Come on, now, let's cut and run between the drops." And "cut and run" they did, though the drops were too close and fast to be escaped, and when they reached home there were all the dear ones watching for them, and waiting with outstretched arms to take them in and "forgive them," Madge said.



CHAPTER XXV.

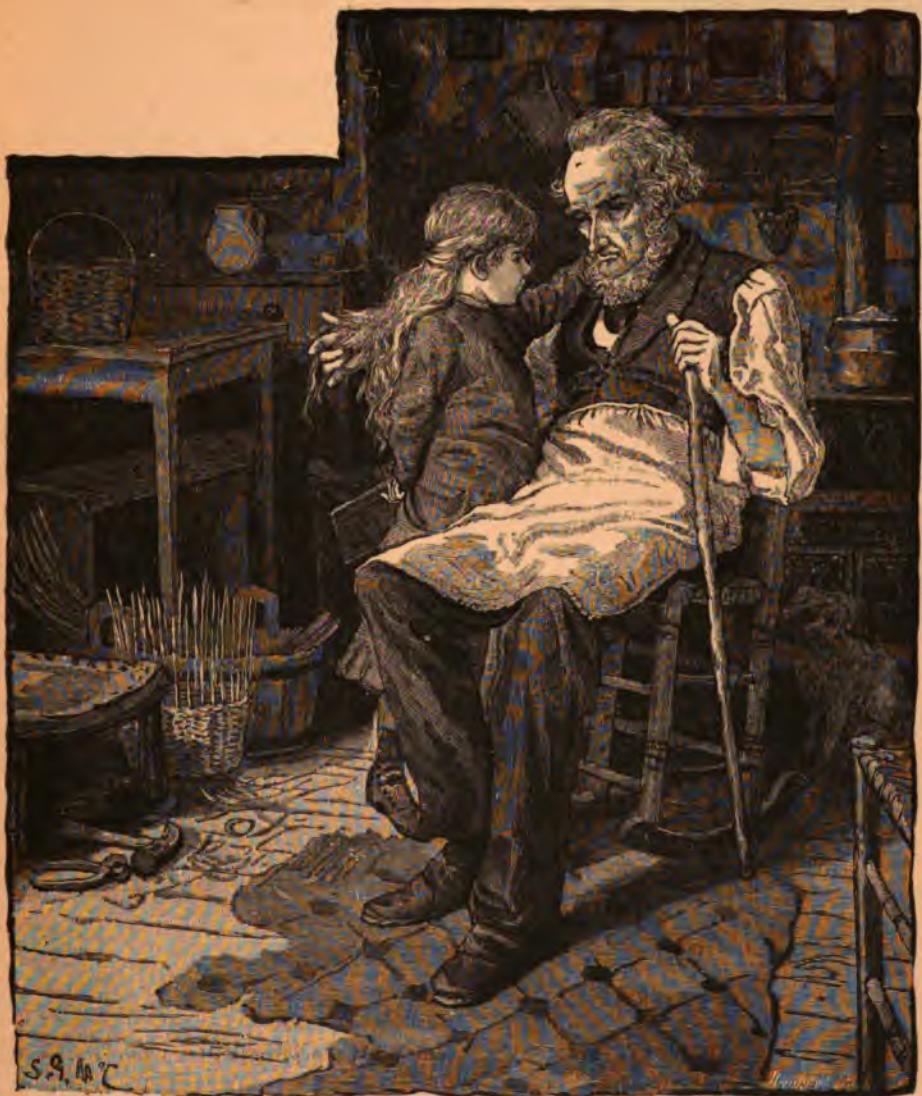
MR. CLARKE AND BIRDIE.



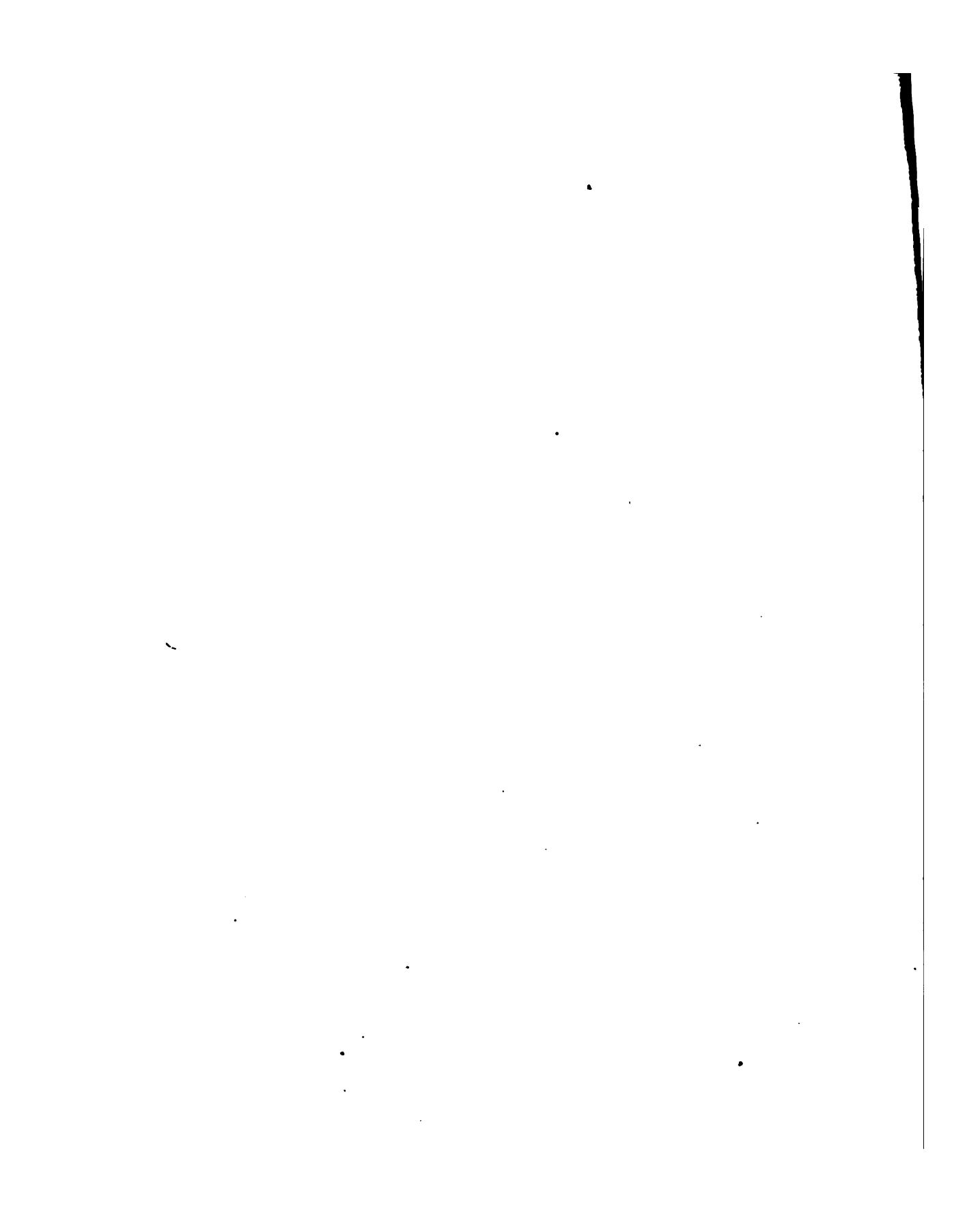
OING to work on baskets to-day, Mr. Clarke?" asked Birdie one morning when just a little touch of sun headache kept her home from a ride long planned. Of course the other little folks had wanted to remain with Birdie, but as the ride, owing to certain circumstances, could not be postponed, Birdie had insisted upon their going, and promised to take good care of herself at home. So with many regrets, and kissings, and parting hugs, the wagon-load had driven off, and Birdie sought the society of Mr. Clarke in his tool-house, a sort of outer kitchen where he worked, and mended things when he found a spare day during the week for such odd jobs about the house. He had been pretty busy all the morning, so when the little girl peeped in at the door and asked her question, he was glad to sit down and have a talk with her.

"Well, I guess I can find a chance to talk to a little girl if she feels like it," he replied.

Birdie smiled gratefully. "Oh, thank you, sir. I was only



"WELL NOW, LET ME SEE: A STORY?"



thinking may be you'd tell me one of your nice stories, you know ; like you've told us before. I like any kind."

"Well, now, let me see ! A story, eh ?" said Mr. Clarke, drawing Birdie nearer and passing his fingers through the long hair waving so softly below her shoulders. "I don't know but what my stories are about told out ; but let me think—oh, there's a bit of rhyme I cut out of one of your city papers some time back, and wife she liked it 'bout as well as I did, so we've kept it along and—well there, it's likely in this drawer"—rising and opening a small table drawer filled with all sorts of things called "scraps." "Yes, here it is ! Now, little miss, if you like I'll just read you this. It's about a little feller your size, I reckon."

So Birdie sat down on a low stool, and Mr. Clarke began to read the following. But first I must explain that there was a sort of heading to the rhyme, telling its readers that when the East River bridge united New York and Brooklyn by its first wires, the night winds playing about and through the wires caused a faint, sweet sound, like the tones of an *Æolian harp*, to be heard by those persons who happened to be in the neighborhood, or were crossing the ferry at that time. During the day, although the same sweet music was probably played on the wires by the breezes, the noise and din of city life prevented its being heard ; but in the stillness of the night, of course it was very distinct. Now for the rhyme, which was named

THE ÆOLIAN HARP AND THE FAIRIES.

Through the dark streets a little outcast crept,
Uncared for, yea, unpitied, tho' he wept,
And near the wharf he drew with noiseless feet,
Unnoticed by the watchman on his beat.
Close by the dock, where piled the lumber high,
He laid him down beneath the starless sky.
But restless as the ever restless tide,
He could not sleep : the blue eyes opened wide,
And strove to pierce the darkness of the night,
Beyond which hid the waiting morning light.
But presently the little wanderer heard—
As tho' the strings of unseen harps were stirred—
A soft, sweet melody, unknown to men.
It trembled, ceased, and trembled yet again.
From some vast height it fell, and seemed as tho'
The angels, pitying the dark world below
Their own bright sphere, had set the gates ajar,
That mortal ears might catch—e'en though afar—
The music of their golden harps. And now
The little outcast, on whose tired brow
A sweet peace rested—hushed his breath to hear
The wondrous music, low, and soft, and clear ;
Then, half affrighted, turned his face to hide.
“ It is the fairies ! Oh, I know ! ” he cried ;
“ It is the fairies, for I've heard they fly
When it is dark, between the earth and sky.”

And close within his hiding-place he drew
With bated breath, until the blue eyes grew
So heavy with their unshed tears at last,
That sleep's dear angel kissed them down ; then pass'd
From his poor heart the troubles of the day,
The griefs and wearinesses fled away ;
And while he dreamed, the touch of fairy hand
Upon the wires outstretched from land to land,
Still hushed the slumbering earth with lullabies
On unseen harps midway 'tween earth and skies.
Angels or fairies, or the soft night breeze—
According as one's fancy best might please—
Played softest melody above the bed
Of pine, whereon the outcast laid his head.
And were the gates ajar that night, I know,
That a freed spirit presently might go
Through the dark space into the morning light,
Where harps are golden, and where is no night.
And those who found with early morning's dawn
The casket whence the priceless gem had gone,
Gave all too late the pity once denied.
How should he need it, at his Father's side ?

"Oh, I do like that!" exclaimed Birdie, when the poem was finished, "but poor little boy ! Oh, Mr. Clarke, Uncle George said once that New York city was full of misery, and poor people suffered very much because folks didn't seem to pity 'em enough."

"Dear little lassie," replied Mr. Clarke, smoothing the little hand he had taken between his own. "Uncle is right, there is a good deal of suffering there, and I say that there is no little boy or girl who has a comfortable happy home, but should be taught to do their best to help, so far as they can in their small way, some other little girl or boy who lacks all those comforts. Why, I had a little girl once, poor dear, she died long ago,—who saved her pennies and coaxed her playmates to save theirs, until they had quite a nice little sum to pay for clothes and food for a poor child in the village whose parents were both drunkards and died in drunken fits. The child would have been taken care of, most likely, but I just encouraged my girl to be pitiful and do what she could to help the child, and the other children took it up, and we grown folks let them carry out their plan. And so they did—till a lady from your city came along one day and took a notion to adopt the orphan."

"Wasn't she a dear little girl?" exclaimed Birdie, feeling a desire to immediately begin and save *her* pennies for some good object. "What else can you read to me, Mr. Clarke? Have you time for another rhyme, please, sir?"

"Only this little thing which somehow made us think of our own little one. Wife kept it in her basket a long while, but one day I tucked it in my vest pocket and then it got in this drawer with other things. Maybe you won't like it, but *I* do. It's called:

‘ My Little Sunbeam.’ Why come to think of it, that’s what your folks call *you*, isn’t it ?” Birdie laughed. “ Yes, sir, sometimes they do. I don’t think I’m much of a sunbeam though, ‘cause I do get so cloudy sometimes, you know.”

“ Well, well, I guess the best of us get cloudy now and then, but here’s the poem :

‘ MY LITTLE SUNBEAM.’

‘ There’s a wee little girl, and I know who,
With a curly head and eyes of blue
Who climbs each night to her mother’s knee,
And asks, “ Mamma, does you *love* little me ?”

‘ This dear little girl is fair and sweet
From her golden head to her dancing feet,
And the cheery voice of my little pet
Is music the heart can ne’er forget.

All day long while the sunbeams last
Till the beautiful daylight all is past,
This little sunbeam shines for me,
As bright a sunbeam as e’er could be.

‘ But when the shadows of night fall down
And take away from the day its crown.
Ah, then the birdies fly home to rest
And snuggle down in their own wee nest.

‘ And the wee little girl with eyes so blue,
And hair so golden, and heart so true,

Climbs lovingly up to her mother's knee,
And asks, "Mamma, does you *love* little me?"'

"Oh!" exclaimed Birdie, when Mr. Clarke had done reading. "I think *that's* better than the other, for it's just like my little Teddie, by baby brother at home. He's forever 'n' ever asking if we love him. I am much obliged to you, Mr. Clarke. I guess I'll go and read a little while in Auntie's room; good by, sir," then she skipped away merrily, and Mr. Clarke went at his basket-mending again, and the minutes had been passing by so speedily all this time, that in a very little while Birdie heard familiar voices below the window and looked out to see the party all returned from their drive, and with plenty of news to tell the little "stay-at-home."



CHAPTER XXVI.

BOBBY RELATES AN UNCOMFORTABLE EXPERIENCE.



“WHAT you writing, Bob Reynolds?” Bob put his hand hastily over the lines on the paper before him. “I’ve been writing to mamma,” he said, “and telling her what no end good fun we’ve had.” Madge saw the sealed envelope on the table beside him, addressed to Mrs. W. Reynolds, Milton, etc., and answered: “The idea! you know

well enough what I mean. You’ve written your mother’s letter and sealed it up, and now you’re doing something else on the sly;

Bobby, I'm ashamed of you not to tell *me*. It isn't nec'ary to tell the other girls, but you must tell *me*, Bob Reynolds, of course." Bob looked doubtful for a minute, then he said: "Well, I'll tell you. I was reading about beacon lights and light houses, and such useful things, you know, and Auntie came in and kissed me, and said why didn't I go out and toss the ball? I told her I had a feeling in my heart that drove the play out of me. Yes, I have, Madge, truly, and I haven't said the first teenty thing to you or the other children about it, so there now!"

"Why, Bob-e-e-e Reynolds!" ejaculated Madge in surprise. "I'll bet a whole new silver dollar that you've been and gone and done something awful! I know it by your looks, now! say, Bob, why didn't you tell *me*, 'cause we're kind of cronies, you see, and I might have helped you be bad; and if people have a *partner* they somehow don't feel so forlorn."

"Yes they do, too, Madge," said Bob, very quickly. "Partners don't help you to think any the better of yourself when your inside feelings are telling you you ain't so good as you're trying to think you are."

"Well, what did you do?" asked Madge, much interested, and anxious to know all about it. Bobby colored all over his little brown face way up to the roots of his curly hair, but he said bravely enough: "Well, you know that black old cross dog that lives at the house the other side of the pond? Well, he—he tried to bite

me the other day just 'cause I was trying to see how loud he could growl when I threw stones at him—" Here Madge interrupted. " I should think you'd have remembered how cruel it is to tease dogs and things that aren't human and can't tease back, Bobby, when Auntie has told you over and over how wicked it is." " Well, all right, Miss Preacher, if you're going to lecture me, I'll just be polite and not talk any more, and let *you* do it all," said Bobby with a resigned air, leaning back in his chair.

" Oh, no, do tell me what you did. I'm not going to preach, I only reminded you, you see. But any way, Bob, I don't think throwing stones at that awful cross old dog was so wicked that you should have been afraid to tell *me* about it. It was wrong, of course, but I don't believe you meant to be *wicked*, did you?"

" Why, that isn't what troubled me so much, though I did know all the time that it wasn't fair on the dog. But, you see, I got mad, and just pitched one big stone at his nose, and it didn't strike his nose but kind of whacked his head and what did he do but die right on the spot!"

Madge drew a long breath. " Oh, my sakes! Bob! wasn't that perfectly awful!"

" Well, I should say it just was," replied the little boy. " And I cut and run hard as I could till I got in the barn, and I hid deep in the hay, and was afraid to come out for a perfect age. The next day the dog's master came over and asked if Mr. Clarke could

tell how in the world his dog 'came killed, and there I knew all the time and didn't say a single word."

"Oh, Bobby!" said Madge reproachfully, "it *was* kind of mean to let him go hunting up the guilty one when it was you, wasn't it?"

"Yes, it was the meanest thing! but you see, Madge, I was so afraid he'd put me in jail."

"Pooh! what if he did. You could break out of that old wooden thing in the village! Besides, Uncle George wouldn't let him. The idea!"

"Well," continued Bobby. "I kept dark about it, and I didn't dare tell you girls; girls are such blabs!" Madge tossed her head, and her brown eyes looked indignantly at Bob. "Very well, Mr. Reynolds, if you think so, just don't play with us any more, guess you'd be pretty lonesome if you didn't though."

Bobby hastened to retract his unfortunate speech. "Oh, I mean when girls think a thing is wrong—they're too honest, you know, and too—too—so much better about telling it out and being sorry than boys. That's what I mean, you see, Madge. Well, so I just decided not to say any thing about the dog at all, but pretend I didn't know, and now it's four days, and I'd got such a lumpy feeling in my heart and felt so kind of blue about it, 'cause I knew it would be the fair thing to go and tell it all out. That's what mamma would say, and Uncle George and Auntie Grace—

and Birdie and Margie." "And *I* would, too, now Bob, you know I would," interrupted Madge reproachfully.

"Well, you know, *you* wanted to be partners, Madge Moore, and I'm 'fraid you're kind of—well, the same kind of a feller as I am 'bout scrapes and things," replied Bob, with considerable hesitancy of speech.

"O, Bob!" exclaimed Madge, and the quick tears sprang to her eyes. Bobby melted instantly, and all his natural gallantry came to the surface. "Oh pshaw, now, I didn't mean it, Madge, I'd—I'd rather have you for a partner than any one else, 'cause you ain't a bit like a saint, and—say, Madge, if you'll make up, I'll go on telling you the rest about me."

Madge dashed the tears away, and Bob proceeded.

"Well, I was sitting here kind of doing nothing, only just reading 'bout the beacon lights in the sea-book there, and when Auntie came and kissed me, you see, and said why didn't I play, I tell you what, I felt the worst feeling I ever had, 'cause if she'd known 'bout my badness, she'd never have kissed me ; *never* in this world. I looked at her, and she—she's just like a fairy, Madge, for she saw there was something wrong inside of me. So she said, 'What is it, Bob ? what's troubling you ?' and she said it so lovingly that I most cried. But I couldn't tell her, and so after a while she went away, but she gave such a sorry look out of her eyes that I couldn't stand it and so I called out, 'Hi, Auntie, just you come

straight back,' and she did, and I told her all about it, and *jiminy jumper!* didn't I feel no end lighter though!

"So now I just love Auntie's dear eyes, and I feel so grateful to 'em I'm trying to write a node to 'em. They call 'em *nodes*, don't they, Madge, those rhyme things that come by the yard in poetry books, you know."

Madge wasn't sure she quite understood the meaning of the term "node," but was anxious to hear how Bob's efforts began. So he timidly showed the lines he had written, and which read as follows :

"' My Auntie's eyes ! my Auntie's eyes !
They take a feller by surprise ;
And make him tell when he's done wrong,
And make him—'

"There I can't seem to get any further, I don't know what to make rhyme with 'wrong,' you see." Madge pondered a minute, then suggested this—

"' And make him wait an awful long
Time before he's bad again
And gives his Auntie dear such pain.'"

"Well," said Bobby, "that might do, but it sounds kind of hitchy about the 'Time' part."

Just then Uncle George came in. He had heard Bob's plaintive tale from Auntie's lips, and felt a sympathy for the little man whose conscience had so troubled him.

"What's up now, children?" he asked, and to him the little boy turned for assistance in the matter of his rhyme. Uncle George couldn't, though he tried, refrain from laughing when he read Bobby's lines, and especially those added by Madge.



A FROLIC IN THE HAY-FIELD.

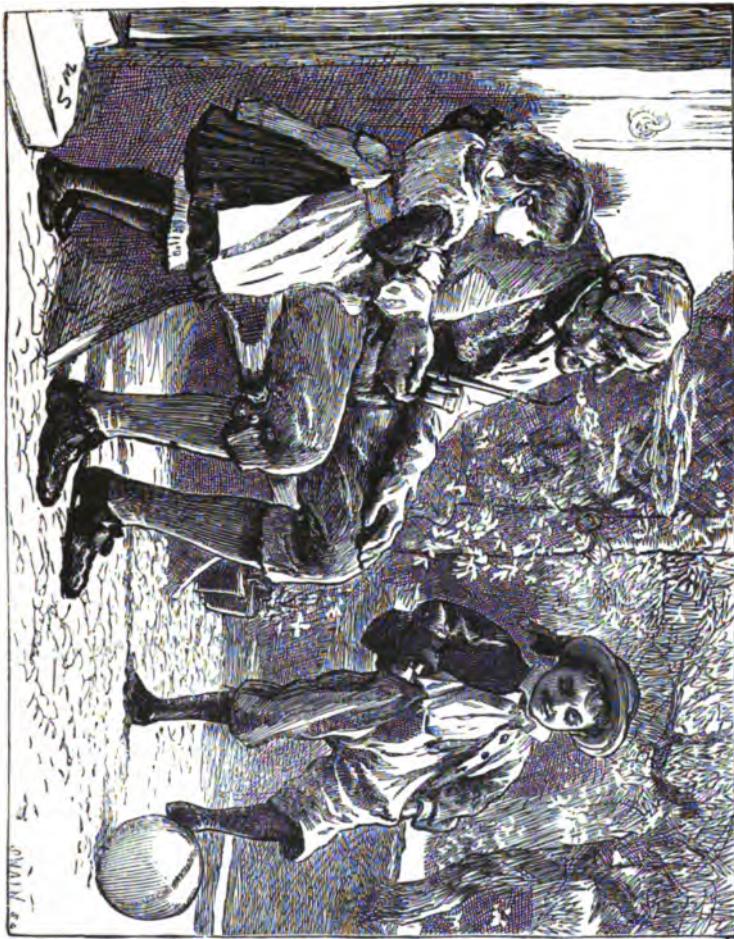
"Here now, you two children run out and play, and, Bobby, I'll get you up a first-rate affair in the way of an ode to Auntie's eyes. They *are* dear eyes, my boy, and I quite honor you for your opinion of them which exactly coincides with mine." So Uncle George seated himself at the table, took the pen in his hand,

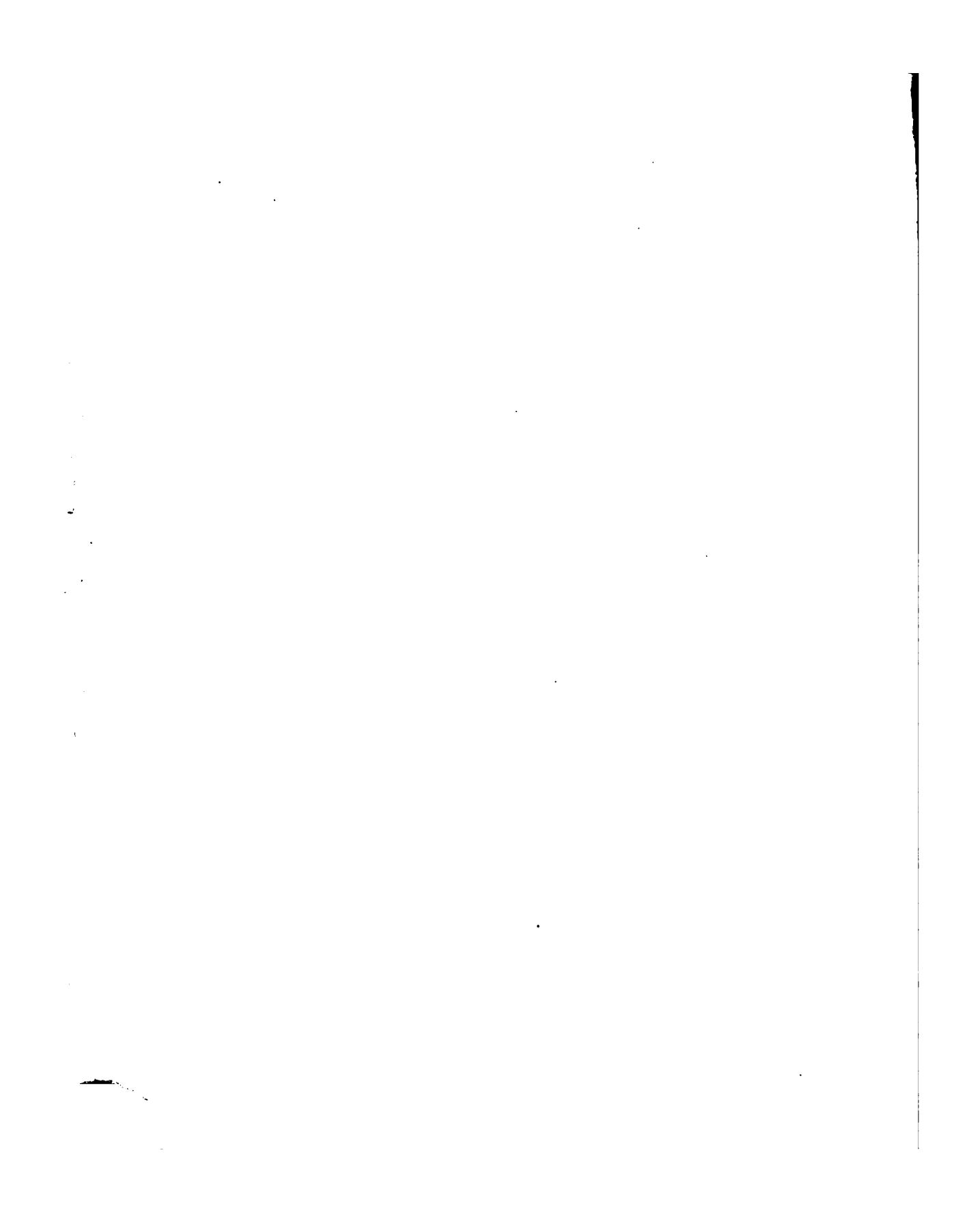
rolled his eyes up to the ceiling, and "prepared to begin," making Bobby and Madge laugh heartily as they took a last look at him before scampering away to the hay-field where Margie and Birdie, and some little new acquaintances they had made had gone in search of a regular frolic. How they played and shouted there! and how they did as all little folks do in the midst of the fragrant hay, that is, pushing each other down and trying to pile the hay over each other; playing hide and seek, climbing the hay-cart only to slide off again, etc. The farmer and his men worked away all the better, no doubt, for the added sunshine of the little faces about them, and the morning slipped away so fast that when the great bell rang its summons to dinner, every body was astonished.

"But I'm rousing hungry though, I tell *you*," cried Bobby, his happy little heart lighter than it had been for days. He knew there was something rather disagreeable to be done after dinner, but he didn't care, he was only impatient to have it over with. Do you guess what it was? I know you do. It was to go with Uncle George and tell the worthy owner of the dog who killed it, and how it happened.

After dinner, Bobby and his uncle were seen to go off alone together, and when they appeared again, Uncle George requested the attention of his family while he read the following effusion dedicated most lovingly to Auntie Grace by Bobby, through his uncle.

SUNLIGHT AND SHADE.





The "node" was called—

"MY BEACON LIGHTS."

"My beacon lights shine out for me,
Across life's wide tempestuous sea.
Amid its shoals I safely steer,
Guided by their true light so clear.
Oh beacon lights, so clear, so true,
Shine out for me my whole life through,
Till in the harbor safe at last,
My ship is moored, life's danger past."

P. S.

"My Auntie's eyes ! my Auntie's eyes,
They take a fellow by surprise,
They are my beacon lights you see,
The very best that e'er could be!"

"Why, I think that is beautiful, Bobby," exclaimed Auntie drawing the little boy to her side and folding him in her arms.

"You see, *I* didn't compose the first part, Auntie," he said, excitedly. "Uncle did that part; I only did the last. But I thought of it all first, and Uncle he helped me fix up the ideas, you know!"

Every body thought it was a lovely idea, and Auntie whispered to Bobby that he ought to be a very careful little mariner, and a wise one when he could have the "beacon lights" of his mother's and auntie's eyes to guide him and warn him all the time. "God bless my little boy, and help him to look ever upward for the one

true, clear, and never-failing light that must guide, guard, and direct all voyages on the sea of life," she whispered earnestly, and then Mr. Clarke knocked at the door to say he had found in the tool house an old foot ball he had played with when a young man, "Would Bobby like to come out and have a kick at it?"

But Bobby, you know, had his errand with Uncle George to do, and after that the foot ball would be a delightful thing for him to kick out the last vestige of a very uncomfortable memory upon. So the errand was done, and by and by the foot ball quite fulfilled its happy mission.



CHAPTER XXVII.

AT THE SEASHORE.



"TIME'S up here!" cried Uncle George one day, and Auntie responded with, "Whither away now, George!" while the children shouted, "Hurrah! hurrah! more traveling, and more fun!"

"We'll go to the seashore awhile," said Mr. Benton. "Don't you think that would be a good plan?"

"If the children don't get drowned," replied Auntie, a little anxiously.

"Who's going to get drowned, Aunt Gracie?" asked Bobby with a sniff of contempt at the bare idea. "Too much fun in living for that, I tell you! isn't there, Madge?"

"H'm I guess so! Besides, we love Auntie lots too much to drown and leave her, don't we?"

"I think it's kind of wicked to make fun of serious things, Bob Reynolds," said Birdie, "and I don't like to even think about such dreadful things as accidents."

"Hasn't it been so far a perfectly *lovely* summer, Auntie?"

asked Margie, as she came and laid her head on her aunt's shoulder with a little contented sigh.

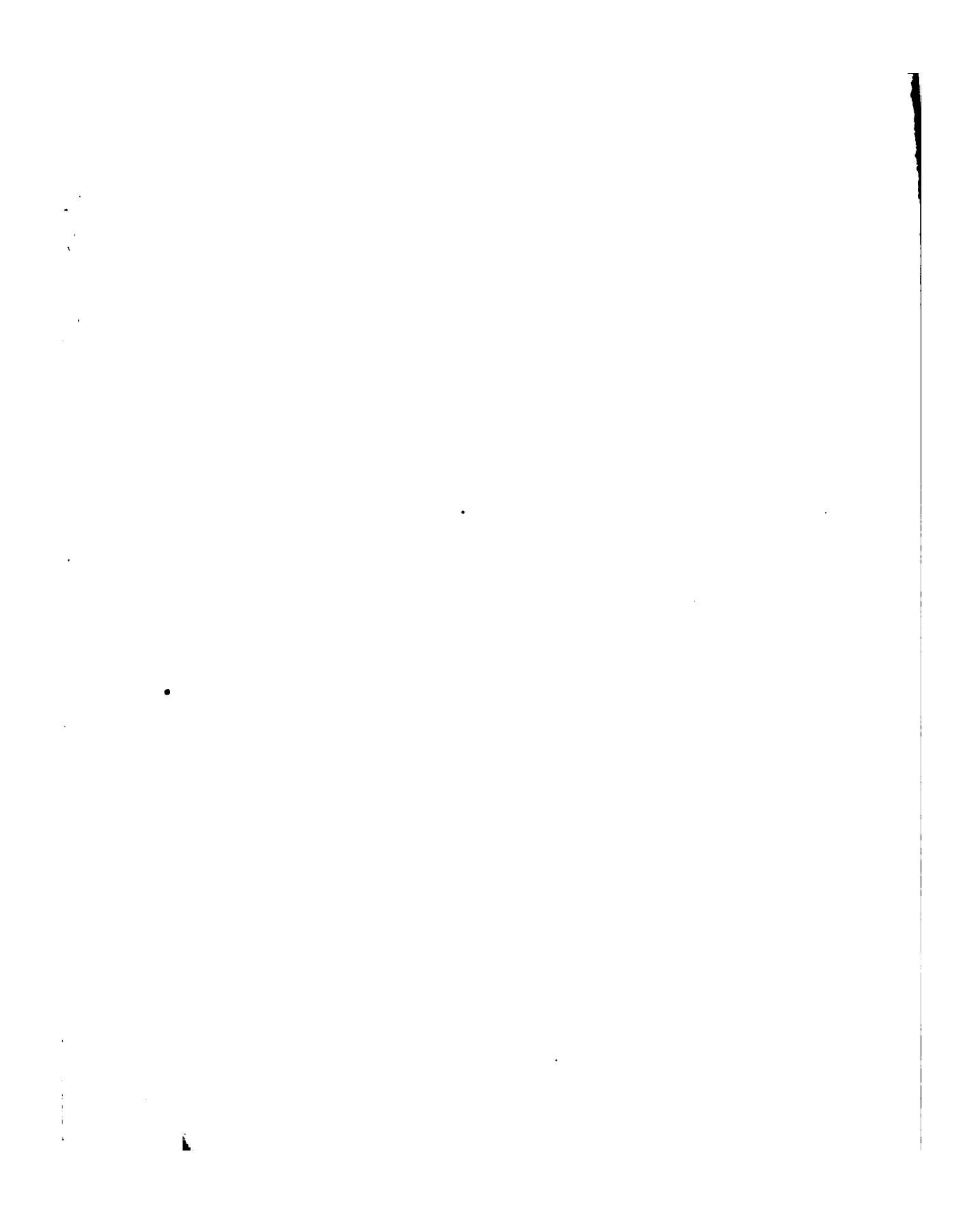
"Yes, darling, and we should be very grateful for all the blessings which have fallen upon us day after day. I sometimes think people get so used to being happy and well provided for during their lives, that they forget to whom they owe all their happiness, and learn to take it for granted as something they deserve, and which is only their right."

"*We* don't feel that way, Auntie," replied little Birdie, "'cause we always say thanks to God every night and every morning, don't we, girls? and we couldn't *dare* plan for things without thinking to ourselves that God will help us plan 'em all right." Auntie kissed her little adopted niece, and whispered a few fond words in her ear, and then the seaside business was talked over merrily, and decided upon.

So, a week later found the party settled at Long Branch. Of course Auntie and Uncle George felt at home there, as each had visited the place before at different times, but to the little folks it was a new scene of enchantment, and Birdie went almost wild with delight. Rooms were taken not far from the beach, and the roar of the breakers along the shore was delightful music to the children's ears as well as to those of their uncle and auntie. The second day of their arrival, it was proposed by Bobby, as a great favor, that he and the little girls should be allowed to take their



AUNTIE EXCLAIMED, "OH DEAR!"



lunch and picnic right on the sands under the great iron pier, where they could have plenty of shade, and get a fair share of the sunshine about them.

"We'll be the best children in the world, Auntie, if you'll say yes," promised Madge, visions of the delights of wading dancing through her head.

"Would you rather do that than take a drive?" asked Auntie Grace, who had planned a long drive for her little people, and even engaged the carriage.

"Mercy! I guess we would, wouldn't we, Bobby?" was the reply, and Margie and Birdie swelled the vote in favor of the beach. So the carriage order was withdrawn, and, while Auntie and Uncle George went to call on a friend at a neighboring house, the little girls and their escort, Bobby, scampered off to the white beach, with a well-filled basket of luncheon to make the "picnic" part a success.

"Now, no mischief, children!" cried Uncle George after them, laughing at Auntie's slight nervousness, lest they should "be drowned." "No mischief, remember! Auntie and I will walk down to look after you presently, and if you're not there, you'll all get sound spankings when you get home!" That sounded very fierce and terrifying, and Birdie whispered to Margie: "Do you s'pose he really *would* whip us? Why, I never was whipped in my life!"

Margie replied: "I never can tell when that Uncle George is in

dead earnest, 'cause, you see, his mouth is so sober, and his eyes look so full of laugh. It is such a mixed kind of look in his face that it's awful hard to know which to believe, the mouth or the eyes."

"Well," joined in Madge, "I'd like to catch Uncle George whipping us ! I'd tell him nobody but my own papa could do that, and *he'd* be ashamed to treat little children so."

"Pooh ! ain't you all 'fraid cats !" chimed in Bobby. "The idea ! Uncle George can't any more have jokes with you girls than a mouse, so now ; I sh'd think you'd *know* he ain't the whipping kind!"

Birdie and Margie drew long breaths of relief. "Well, I thought as there's a first time to every thing, and he looked so awfully sober, that may be he would really punish us if we got drowned this time," said Birdie. "Come on, children, let's see who'll get down under the pier first!"

They all started, but Margie happening to have the basket of luncheon in her hands, could not run as fast as the others, and therefore called out indignantly, that "it wasn't fair !" So as Madge and Birdie returned to keep pace with her, Bobby won the race easily, and began to "crow over" his friends from the platform in course of erection under the pier a little back of the sands.

The men had left a part of the platform unfinished, and Master Bob, in the course of his "crowing" process, stepping back excit-

edly, was seen by the girls to suddenly disappear from view. He emerged, however, in a moment from under the platform looking very crestfallen, and decorated with bits of shavings, into a pile of which he had landed as he fell through the hole.

"Aha! aha!" cried the little girls, exultantly.

"Well, I'll bet *you* daresn't do it, so now," retorted Bob, "that wasn't any thing for a *boy* to do, but girls are so 'fraid of a hole!"

"Now here's a perfectly lovely place for us to hide our basket," cried Madge, as she settled it in a bank of sand, on a board which she found near, and which would keep the bottom of the basket dry and free from sand.

"Yes, nobody will see it there, and the water can't come so high up, I'm sure," replied Margie.

So they fixed it snugly and securely, and then looked about them in delight, over the beautiful broad beach and the glistening waters which stretched far away.

"Oh, let's build a fort!" suggested Bobby.

"We can't dig much with only our fingers," said Madge.

"Well, I saw a place up past those steps where a woman sells shovels and pails. Shall I go and buy some?" asked Bob. The little girls were delighted, and eagerly assented, then suddenly remembered that they had no money. "Oh, pshaw!" replied Bobby, gallantly. "I've got plenty of that stuff, see?" and he

jingled a small pile of pennies in his pocket. "'Nough to buy shovels, any way, and we don't want pails, do we?"

"Well," said Margie, "if you'll *lend* us the money, Bob, we'll be glad to have you buy 'em."



Bobby held up his head loftily. "Guess there's nothing mean about your cousin Robert Reynolds, children. I can afford to *present* you with the shovels. Whoop! here goes!" and he was off up the steps like a "streak of lightning," as they say. "Bob's a real lovely boy! isn't he?" said Margie to Birdie, and the answer was earnestly given: "He's the bestest boy to have

around that I ever knew! He's so good that you can't seem to mind it much when he's naughty, somehow."

So pretty soon the little people were busy building their sand fort, and racing over the sands in high glee.

But oh! what a sudden and disagreeable interruption was that of the great wave which came rolling in from sea, and crept softly up the beach to make the acquaintance of the little new comers. It had the impudence to intrude itself upon them after its own rude fashion, and presently three very wet little folks flew up and off from the spot, leaving the waters to revenge themselves by knocking down the fort, and even worse than that, by stealing the basket of luncheon from its hiding place, and if Madge had not seen it just rolling over, as the wave lifted the board upon which it was rested, and if she had not pounced upon it, regardless of wetting her feet, I am afraid there would have been no picnic on the sands that morning.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

GOOD TIMES.



“WASN’T that perfectly disgusting?” cried Maggie, as Madge came up to them holding the precious basket, and triumphantly declaring that the

contents were not wet at all. “Wasn’t that horrid old wave disgusting! What *should* we have done if our lunch had been carried out to sea?”

“Here, I’m the feller can hide the basket so another wave won’t get it,” cried Bobby, taking it from Madge. So he found a place behind some boards under the platform, and once more they turned their attention to play. “Let’s wade,” cried Bob, and without waiting for an answer he divested himself of shoes and stock-

ings and walked down towards the water where the ripples were gently lapping the sands. It looked so peaceful and quiet there, and the sunlight flickered over the beach and sparkled like diamonds on the waters as far away as the eye could reach.

"I guess the big waves are through coming up so near any more," he thought, "and I'll go down as far as I can." Just at that moment Auntie and Uncle George appeared some little distance down the beach, walking slowly to join the children. Uncle George was in the midst of recalling some tender recollection of past days, when Auntie exclaimed, "Oh, dear!" in such a distressed voice that he looked at her in amazement. She pointed to the spot where the children were gathered, and he beheld poor little Bob, who had waded innocently out to meet an incoming wave, running with all speed up the beach to escape it, while the big wave rolled on after him, and at last fairly caught the little figure in its embrace.

"Oh, I knew it! I knew it! He will be washed out to sea!" exclaimed Aunt Gracie, running as fast as she could, and imploring Uncle George to run faster.

But Bobby, though thrown down by the force of the wave, was detained on the spot where he fell by the brave little Birdie, who had rushed in and grabbed his foot just in time. And as the waters sullenly receded, they left the little well-soaked boy gasping for breath and looking the picture of despair, while Birdie, also

pretty wet, and Margie and Madge were hauling him in by his legs and arms, and trembling all over with excitement.

As for Aunt Gracie, she just sank down on the sands and began to cry softly out of sheer gratitude for her boy's escape, while Bobby himself at last found voice to call out: "Hi, now, you, Auntie! Don't cry! That makes a feller feel worse 'n a goose!"

"My boy," said Uncle George gravely, "you have had a narrow escape truly, and it proves that Auntie was right when she feared that *you* would be the first to get into trouble."

The emphasis on the "you," cut poor little Bobby to the very soul, and as soon as he could release his struggling legs and arms from the grasp of the three girls, who were actually yet afraid he would be washed off again—he walked meekly over to where Auntie sat, and putting his wet arms around her neck, began to tell her how much he loved her, and how hard he would try not to be careless, and finally the little fellow himself broke down and cried like the child he was. "Oh, Auntie, Auntie! s'pose I'd been carried back by that awful wave! What would mamma have said when you went back without me! Oh dear! I-I-did-di-didn't mean to go so far! and, Auntie, I really didn't go-o-out so fa-far you know, but it was that wa-ave-that ca-ame *in* so far, and-and didn't give a feller any kind of a fair ch-ance." All this was sobbed out of Bobby's poor little heart, on Auntie's shoulder, while Uncle George and the girls were talking about it a little way off. Pres-

ently a thought struck him. "Auntie, it was that Bird Starr that grabbed me first, and I think she's the bravest girl ever was, don't you?"

"Yes indeed, my boy, and you must be very gentle with Birdie after this, remembering not to speak hastily when she unintentionally vexes you."

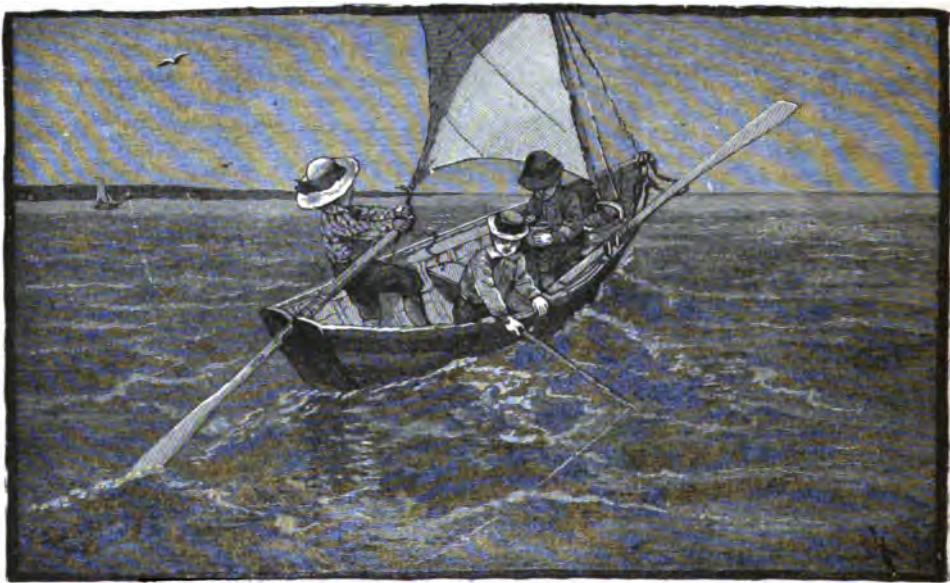
Bob colored. He remembered certain occasions when he had shown what is called a "temper," over little differences of opinion, and once not very long ago—oh, how he blushed now to recall it, he had made Birdie cry just a few tears. To be sure he had kissed them away again, and loved the darling little girlie all the better for having hurt her, but that didn't make his conscience feel any the better, for he knew he had been ungentle and unmanly. So now he wiped his brown eyes free from tears, pulled down his wet jacket, and pulled the light shawl which Auntie had thrown over him more closely about his shoulders, then walked as hastily as he could over to where the girls and Uncle George were talking.

"Say, Bird, you're a regular brick, you are! If it hadn't been for you I might have been—have been drowned. True as you live, 'pon my sacred word and honor, I'm never going to be rude to you again, and I'm going to be so improved that all you children can choose the games and I'll give in to 'em all, so there now!"

"Bravo, Bobbins!" exclaimed Uncle George, while Birdie,

Margie and Madge stood overwhelmed with surprise. "Now we must get something dry on you, or you'll be apt to take cold. It is fortunate the day is a hot one, and the water is salt."

The house where they had rooms was not far away, and Bobby



begged so that the picnic might not be spoiled, that Uncle and Auntie finally said he might go on alone and change his clothes, and return to lunch on the sands as had been planned. Madge stoutly insisted upon going with Bob, and the two ran off in great glee, while the little girls left behind walked with Uncle George further up the beach to watch a party of venturesome children

managing a small boat in which they had rigged a sail, and proposed to "go a fishing."

Meanwhile, "I'll sit here and wait for Bob and Madge," said Auntie Grace. "And keep an eye on the lunch basket, Auntie!" suggested Margie as she ran after Birdie. Auntie saw that the basket was safe where the children had showed it to be hidden, and taking a book out of her pocket began to read. Pretty soon she heard a shout and the words, "We're coming! We're coming!" rang out over the beach in Bobby's voice.

But suddenly she beheld Bob and Madge start on a faster run, and heard them scream, "Look out now! that's ours!" and turning to see what was happening behind her, what did she discover but the dreadful fact that somebody was appropriating their basket of luncheon. It was a little colored boy who had heard the children tell Auntie where they had hidden their lunch, and with the craftiness of his kind had stolen under the platform to secure it for himself and the companions who were as hungry as he was.

But in spite of his cat-like tread, and his wary movements, he was not able to get away with his bounty. As soon as he heard Bobby's frantic yell, he dropped the basket and scampered with feet that seemed shod with the wind across the sands to where his colored friends awaited him, bearing in his hands but one orange which he had been able to secure from the basket as the cover slipped partly aside. This, when at a safe distance, he held above

his head, and wagged the fingers of his other hand defiantly at Bobby.

"Hi, you darkey ! you feller from cloudland, you lot of thunder storm clouds !" screamed the furious Bobby. " Didn't you think you'd get the whole concern, eh ? "



For reply, the darkey with the orange danced a jig, while his companions grinned, and by that time Auntie called the children off and sent them in search of the trio on the beach further up, to tell them " hungry time " had come.

So we will leave them all seated on the smooth white sands around the precious basket, and in the next chapter we must bid our four little friends good-by.

CHAPTER XXIX

HOMEWARD BOUND.



HE pleasant days at Long Branch soon slipped by, and Uncle George at last gave the word for the home start. Oh, how hard it was to hear that word, and Madge and Margie actually cried about it, so that they hid themselves and their red eyes up in Auntie's room for a full hour.

Meanwhile, Bobby and Birdie sat in the hammock talking the matter over sadly. "I'd like to see my mother, wouldn't you, Bobby?" she presently asked, and Bob replied, "Yes, indeed, you may bet your last cent on that, but, I say, Bird, it's too bad to go *just yet*, you know."

Birdie agreed, but somehow the more she thought of mamma, and the dear grandma and grandpa, and oh! sweet little Teddie! the less sad she felt, all of a sudden, about leaving the beach and its fun, and she began singing a little song about going home, which was quite her own composition in words and melody.

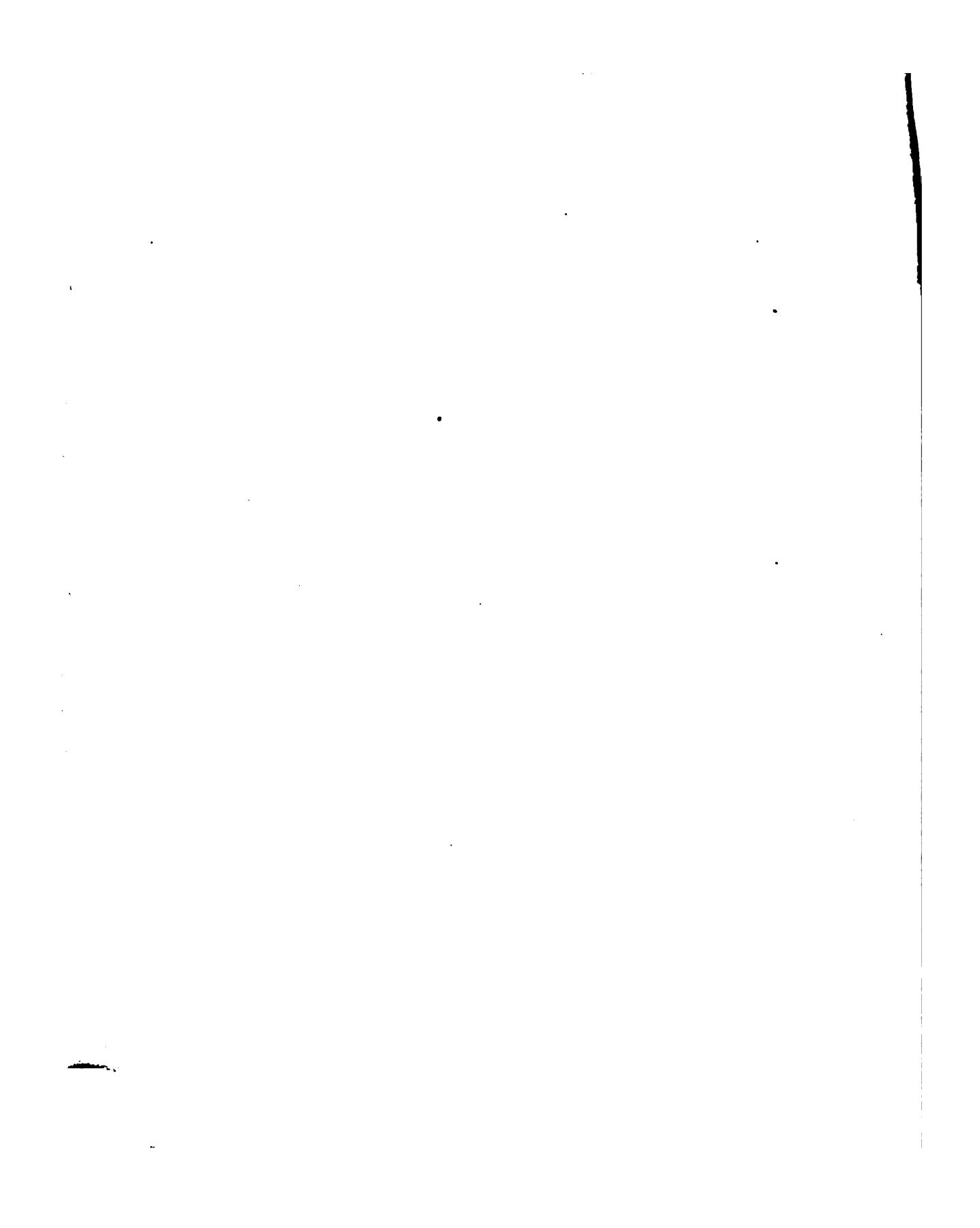
I need not take the time to tell of the short but still pleasant journey home from Long Branch. It was only a three or four hours' sail, and the children enjoyed it to the end. And when the carriage drove up to the stoop of Mr. Moore's house, on the day of their arrival, at last, there was papa waiting on the steps to receive them, with extended arms, and the warmest of kisses for his little daughters and their friend Birdie. "Bobby, I'd kiss *you*," he said, "but I never did like to kiss a man, you know, so here's a shake of the hand, and a welcome home, my dear little boy."

Bobby said, "Never mind. *Auntie Grace* kissed *three* men, Mr. Moore, Uncle George and himself." But he was too impatient to see his mother to wait any longer for jesting, so Uncle George and he jumped back into the carriage and drove rapidly to another door, where a sweet lady stood watching and waiting for her one little son, and oh, how quickly he sprang into her arms, the dear little man! and nobody heard him whisper, "Oh, mamma dear, it is good for a feller to have a mamma when he loves her so much and is so glad to see her, isn't it?"

The next afternoon at the little cottage home in Milford as a dear grandma sat reading her Bible at the hour of twilight, and feeling grateful in her heart for the safe return of her little "sunbeam" who had been at home since morning, the door opened and Birdie's sunny face appeared. "Dear Grandma," she said as she leaned lovingly across the patient knees, "do you



THE PEACEMAKER.



know I've been all over the house and the garden and all, and I've played with my Teddie, and hugged mamma, and you and grandpa, and I truly think that no place in all this big, wide, awfully large world *could* ever be so dear to me as my own sweet home!"

"Yes, sunbeam," replied grandma, taking off her spectacles and looking fondly at the dear little face before her, "you know the old song that I sing sometimes, about 'the dearest spot on earth to me, is home, sweet home?' To a true, loving heart, there is no place so dear and sweet as home, but it was often a pretty lonely home to grandma while her pet lamb was away. Bless you, darling, you don't know how glad I am to have you back!"

Meantime, Madge and Margie had explored their house to their heart's content. Then they went out to the little garden behind the house, and greeted lovingly every shrub and bush which grew inside the four walls which usually shut in an unhappy city garden plot, and there Madge discovered a new treasure in the shape of a dog which papa had bought to help guard the house at night. The old tabby cat, the veritable animal which Bobby had teased so at one time, when he covered her tail with molasses and stuck paper over it here and there, was just about beginning a spirited argument with Rover when Madge appeared, and was glad to end it safely by springing upon the little girl's shoulder. Madge played the part of "peacemaker" in a very *unpeaceful* manner,

it must be confessed, and Rover went off feeling that in the *spirit* of the thing, at least, he had had his ears boxed.

That evening there was a small, very select and private concert given for the benefit of the performers themselves in the little cottage, and the names of the singers were, Mamma Starr, Grandma and Grandpa Grey, Birdie Starr and Master Teddie Starr, and the song they sang ran as follows :

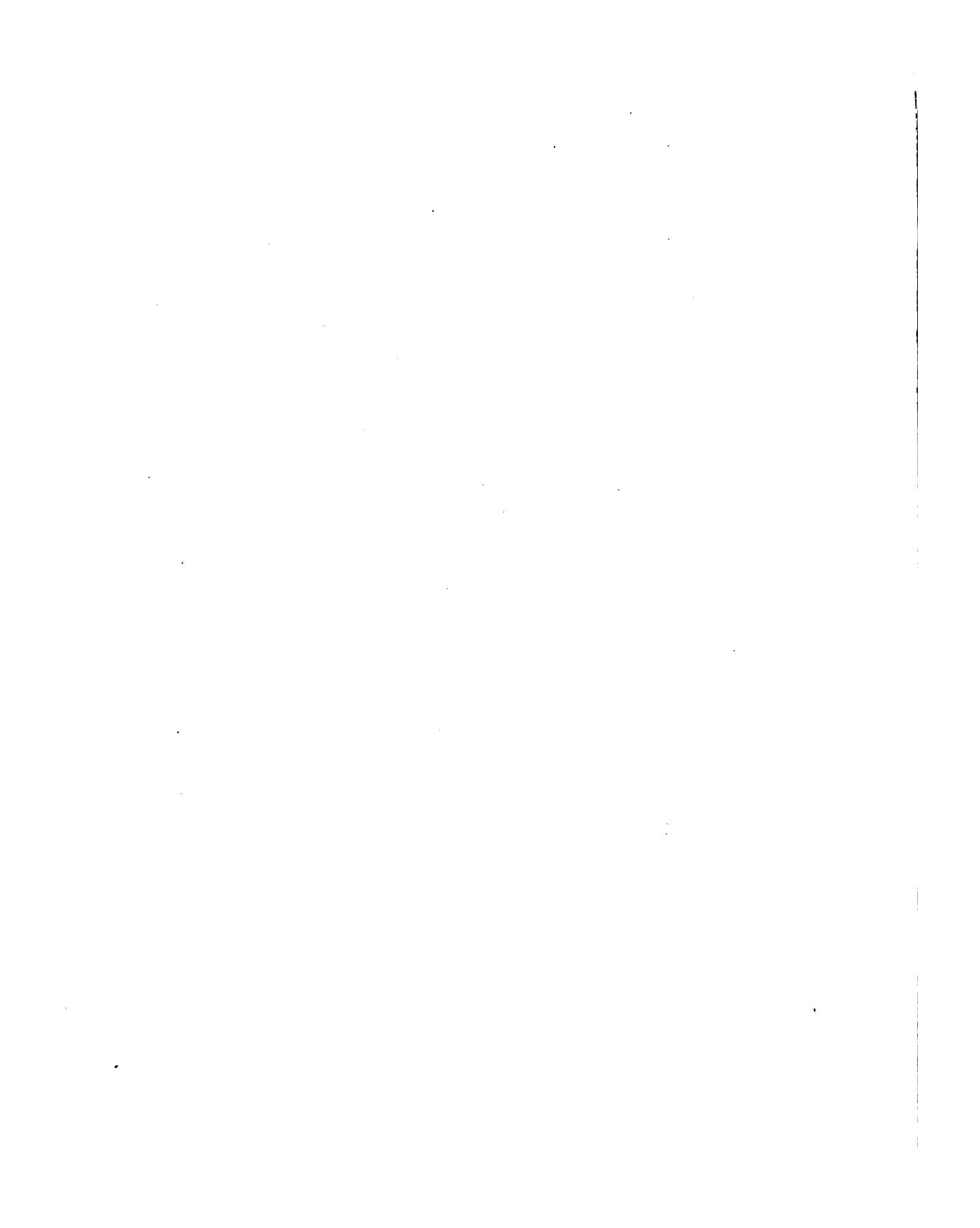
“ ‘Mid pleasures and palaces, tho’ I may roam,” &c.,

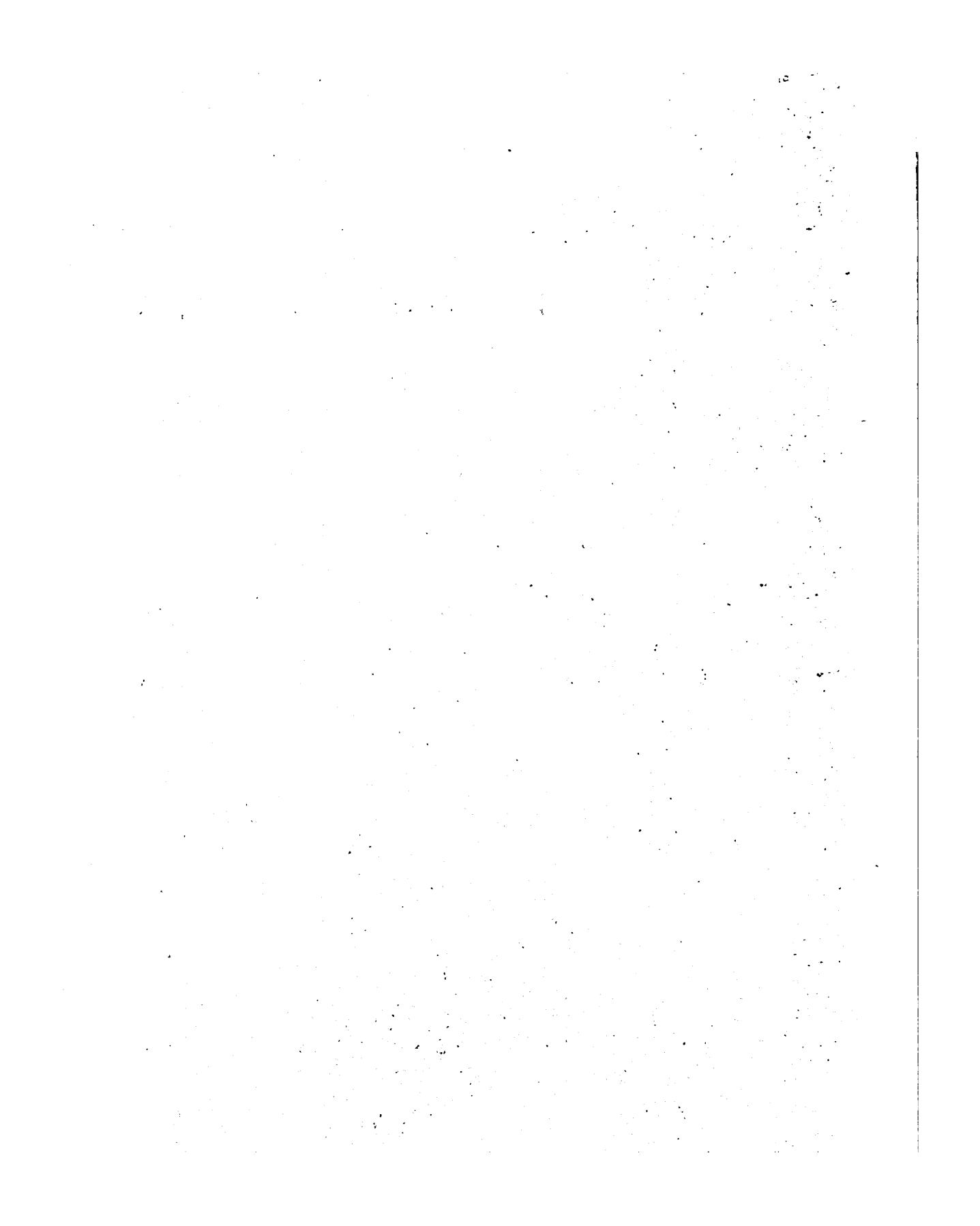
and the chorus was :

“ Home, home, sweet home,” &c.,

and while that concert was going on in Milford, two dear little daughters in a certain house in New York were sitting on papa’s knees, telling him as they twined loving arms about his neck, how happy a summer they had enjoyed, but how, after all, there seemed no place so restful and so dear, and so lovely to be in as their own home because—with a kiss—“ It held their bestest, dearest papa in all the world !” Then there were good-night kisses, and bed-time brought rest and sleep to “ Papa’s Little Daughters.”

THE END.





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